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ABSTRACT

An extensive discussion of current problems in preschool education provision in the European community is provided and supplemented by working papers and reports from a colloquium examining the needs of European preschool children and preschool program design. After a broad description of the general features of preschool education as it has developed in the area, the volume offers a critical reappraisal of the institution of the nursery school along with explorations of the nursery school as an integrated social service, as a flexible provider of continuity in children's transition to formal education, as a guarantor of young children's rights, as locus for community participation, and as an environment adapted to the needs of handicapped, rural, migrant, and disadvantaged children. Issues of staff training, teaching and educational research, nursery school administration, and research needs are subsequently discussed. The contents of the colloquium papers focus on specifying young children's needs and rights in various social and cultural settings and on the qualities required in preschool education if it is to satisfy those needs. The volume concludes with a synthesis report of colloquium outcomes and a list of participants. Also included are 12 tables of data on variables related to the provision of preschool education in the European community. (Author/RH)

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FOREWORD

This publication presents the preparatory work which the Commission has undertaken as a first step in implementing an important element in the Resolution which the Council and Ministers of Education adopted on 9 February 1976.

The Resolution invited the Commission, in cooperation with the Education Committee, to arrange an exchange of views on the organization of nursery education and its link with primary education, with special reference to the interests of underprivileged groups.

Within all the Member States great interest in recent years has been shown in the extension and development of pre-school education, and in particular in the contribution which this can make to compensating the social, economic, cultural and other disadvantages from which many children and families suffer.

This interest has also been reflected in the work of organizations which operate at international and European levels. In addition to the very substantial work undertaken in this field by the Council of Europe over the last few years, one must mention the more recent interesting 'Early Childhood' project of the OECD.

In developing its own approach, therefore, the Commission has followed closely the priorities and preoccupations of Member States while building on and complementing the activities of the international organizations. My view is that the best way of doing this will be to look for points at which the development of pre-school education may help us to solve problems which are already a matter of major concern to the Community - which are clearly 'Community business' because they involve common problems. The importance of pre-school education to migrant and to handicapped children affords two good examples. The particular problems of organizing pre-school provision in sparsely populated areas and less-favoured regions are also themes of special interest to the Community.

I believe that the work incorporated in this publication offers a good start to our activity. It owes much to the active cooperation of the French Ministry of Education, both in making available the services as consultant of inspector Madeleine Goutard and in offering the hospitability of the International Pedagogic Centre at Sèvres for our seminar. The chief value of Mme Goutard's work in my opinion is that it leads us quickly to a consideration of the key pedagogic and policy issues. It is this analytical approach that made it possible for the enthusiastic experts who met together at Sèvres to cooperate so fruitfully. I hope it will provide the basis for further exchanges of views between policy-makers and practitioners in the Member States of the Community.

Guido Brunner
Member of the Commission
of the European Communities

November 1979

Contents

Part A - CURRENT PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION PROBLEMS IN THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY
(Report prepared for the Commission by Mme Madeleine Goutard) . 7

Introduction 9

Chapter I - Broad description and general features of pre-school education in the EC Member States 11

Chapter II - Reappraisal of the nursery school 15

Chapter III - The nursery school: an integrated social service 17

Chapter IV - The nursery school: first stage in the educational system 21

Chapter V - The nursery school as guarantee of a young child's rights 33

Chapter VI - The nursery school open to the Community 37

Chapter VII - The nursery school for all 43

Chapter VIII - Staff training 49

Chapter IX - Teaching and research 57

Chapter X - Nursery school administration 61

Chapter XI - Future prospects 65

Tables 71

Part B - Papers of a colloquium on PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION IN EUROPE - PROSPECTS IN THE COMMUNITY
organized by the Commission in cooperation with the French Ministry of Education at the Centre International d'Etudes Pédagogiques at Sèvres, 21-23 May 1979 83

1. Working papers prepared by Mme Goutard 85
   A - Objectives of the seminar 85

B - Key questions to be used as topics for discussion 88

2. Reports of the four discussion groups 91

3. Synthesis Report by Mme Goutard 105

4. List of participants 113

Part A

CURRENT PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION PROBLEMS IN THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY

Report prepared for the Commission
by Mme Madeleine Goutard

INTRODUCTION

Recognition of the importance of early childhood to a person's development has stimulated interest in the education of young children. International organizations such as UNESCO, the Council of Europe and the OECD have conducted a whole series of major projects on the subject and several conferences of the European ministers responsible for education or family affairs have made recommendations supporting education for young children, in connection with community requirements.

The report given here was prepared at the request of the Commission of the European Communities, Directorate-General for Research, Science and Education, under the Resolution of the Council and of the Ministers of Education, meeting within the Council on 9 February 1976 (Item 21 a); as part of the 'exchange of views and experience on ideas and trends to define the specific areas in which common measures might be taken', the Resolution provides for special study of

> 'the organization of pre-school education and its association with primary education and the organization of the latter, with a view to enabling all children to benefit from secondary education, taking into special consideration the interests of the least privileged groups'.[1]

We have taken care to ensure that this report does not uselessly repeat the work of the Council of Europe and of the OECD (CERI) whose two summary reports are now being completed. Taking their work as a basis and following their general lines, we have sought rather to identify the general problems of preschool education as revealed by the latest changes, experiments in progress and trends appearing in the nine EC Member States.

We have drawn on our own previous experience, gained on three continents, and have taken advantage of the valuable assistance provided by the correspondents indicated to us by the governments of the EC Member States and of the help of other experts (in particular those of the World Organization for Pre-school Education) whose opinions we considered important. The information which they supplied, the visits and meetings which they organized for us and the productive discussions which we had with them were especially enlightening and we should like to express our extreme gratitude to them. Their comments on the draft of this report and the discussion of some points at a meeting in Brussels enabled us to amend the report as necessary.

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[1] The part relating to this report has been underlined.

Rather than 'pre-school education', many prefer to discuss 'education for young children' beginning at birth. They feel that the needs of a young child should be considered as a whole and that the usual pre-school establishments provide only a small part of all the requirements.

Work undertaken under the above-mentioned Resolution, which is concerned with the effectiveness of the educational system, should of course be centred on the education provided in establishments attended immediately prior to the primary school and more or less linked with it. However, we have widened our aim in this critical study. Whilst encompassing pre-schooling as it actually is now, we have tried to determine how it could better serve the young child considered as a whole and in relation to his environment and future development.

Although it is open to criticism and is somewhat inadequate, we have used the term 'pre-school' because it is universally applied to the establishments studied. We preferred it to 'pre-primary' or 'pre-elementary' (also open to criticism for different reasons) because it provides a better distinction between the traditional school and pre-school education and prevents us from presuming some sort of relation between the two institutions prior to discussion of the subject. However, to make matters easier, this term has been replaced below by 'école maternelle' (nursery school), which is commonly used in France and Italy, although this name has also been criticized, especially now that men teachers are accepted in nursery schools.

To prevent possible ambiguity, the term 'primary education' has been used throughout although some French-speaking countries use 'elementary education' instead. In the Federal Republic of Germany the term 'elementary' is applied only to pre-school education while in France this term sometimes covers both nursery and primary education. The term 'primary school' is also more evocative of some features of schools, which are discussed in the text.

Chapter I

BROAD DESCRIPTION AND GENERAL FEATURES OF PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION IN THE EC MEMBER STATES

When the various countries were organizing and developing education for very young children, only two models of child education were available: that of the family and that of the traditional school. Depending on circumstances, one model or the other prevailed. Generally speaking, where the family model predominated, the pre-school establishment has an informal atmosphere and is largely a place for play, where the child is looked after and cared for physically, and where conversation with adults is concerned mainly with his immediate requirements. Where school was the predominant model, the atmosphere is more formal and more strict, there is less intimacy, conversation is at a higher level and is more for the purpose of instruction; the number of children in the care of one adult is higher.

In the one case preference is given to accommodation in houses with a large number of small rooms, recreating a family atmosphere, while in the other accommodation is in large rooms where the children can be easily supervised by the adults. The way the nursery is run and the qualities required in the staff also vary according to the basic model.

There are still relatively few instances of pre-school education finding its own feet and becoming different from the two models, of its finding an original solution to this new challenge in the history of education, the challenge to organize the communal life of very young children. By its very existence, the pre-school establishment creates a psycho-social reality sui generis; it is unlike the family, on account of the large number of children of roughly the same age who live together there, and it is unlike school, on account of the particular mentality of children of this age; in this respect they are quite different from older children.

Gradually, with time, empirically and intuitively at first, we have learnt to discern the psychological and sociological features peculiar to these small communities of young children and varying efforts have been made to determine from them the educational facilities required. There are in fact some instances of pre-school education being all the more successful because it has escaped the undue hold of its two major models. It has then been better able to cope with its own situation and find its own solution.

A new educational model can now be said to exist - that of the nursery school, however varied it may be, and it is a model which frequently commands admiration. The general attitude of the public to pre-school education is none the less still highly ambivalent. Despite the criticism made of them, family and school remain the only two proper models, the very nature of which is not questioned, except by some extremists. Although no one feels the need to justify the essential part played by family or school in bringing up children, arguments are still needed to justify the existence of pre-school education, which nevertheless dates back one hundred years and is often considered more satisfactory than the primary school. It is significant that its existence is largely justified in relation to the family and school, by such reasons as:

(a) the need to prepare the child for primary school,

(b) mothers at work,

(c) houses too small,

(d) small families,

(e) the need to make up for shortcomings within the family.

The truly original aspects of the nursery school are often considered unimportant. Parents appreciate chiefly those aspects of its function which provide a substitute for family responsibilities (caring for and looking after children). They are still eager above all to have their children admitted as early as possible to the primary school where, in their opinion, education really begins in earnest. Appreciation of the nursery class is usually greater the more it foreshadows and anticipates the primary school. However, the strength of the bond of affection between parents and their very young children seems to have repercussions on the nursery school, which generally inspires families with a fairly high level of confidence.

The major importance of an external model is explained by the late arrival of pre-school education in the history of education. The preferential choice of model is explained by the variety of ventures which led to the foundation of pre-school establishments, since the various founding bodies naturally incorporated their own experience and wishes into the organization of these establishments. When the founders were concerned mainly with families and social problems, the institution assumed a highly social character, when they were of a medical disposition, the emphasis was on physical care, and when they were from the teaching profession, the institution tended to be a school preparing children for primary school.

Depending on whether the public authorities exercised their legislative and organizational powers at an early or late date, pre-school education shows varying degrees of development, of uniformity, of integration into the system of public services and the educational system and of free availability to all children. Within one and the same country, one sector can also be well developed and well integrated while another is far from being so (see Table 2).

For all these reasons each European country is faced with problems having a different emphasis, depending on whether its pre-school education is: .

(a) inadequately or unevenly developed,

(b) inadequately supported by the public authorities,

(c) disorderly in its development,

(d) badly integrated into the educational system,

(e) deficient at the social level (insufficiently geared to the needs of the community),

(f) deficient at the medical level (inadequate prevention of physical and mental handicaps), or

(g) deficient from the point of view of education proper (little educational stimulation or else a tendency to be too 'instructive').

Whatever the case may be, pre-school education is generally in great demand everywhere by both families and children. The point of difference between one country and another is the age from which it is required. Obviously this depends on the age at which compulsory schooling commences (see Table 3) and on the extent of pre-school education since, in general, the more widespread it is, the more it is in demand (see Table 5). In Denmark children of 6 years are not yet all at school and the demand for pre-school education is highest in their case; in the United Kingdom, Luxembourg, Belgium and France all children of 5 years attend an educational establishment.

The development of pre-school education in some countries therefore seems to be taking the form of a gradual lowering of the age of compulsory school attendance. It is remarkable that this gradual generalization has occurred without legal obligation, since countries have so far preferred to raise the school-leaving age.

In countries in which pre-school education has been integrated into the school system to a large extent (France, Benelux, Ireland), so much so that its way of life is copied from that of the primary school, regular attendance at nursery classes is equivalent to extending the child's period of compulsory education by one or more years. In countries which are trying to provide pre-school education for the maximum percentage of all children, this situation raises the question of the advisability of lowering the compulsory school attendance age. Assuming that attending a nursery class is considered beneficial, the effect of this administrative measure would be to reach the children of those few families which always try to evade compulsory schooling and whose children are felt to need it the most. It is for this reason that Luxembourg has made school attendance compulsory at 5 years as from September 1977.

A decision of this kind has its repercussions on the character of the pre-school institution and does not merely ratify a situation. Pre-school establishments often claim to have a style of freedom. They want the children to attend happily, not to feel forced to arrive spot on time, not to feel that they must attend when a family occasion or outing might keep them away. Consequently the above decision is regarded unfavourable, even by many who are in favour of nursery schools. They see in it a further restriction on the liberty of both children and parents. For them it indicates a more pronounced tendency to 'formalize', to 'regiment' young children. Immediate reaction to its decision led the Luxembourg Government to change compulsory attendance at 5 years into a simple obligation to register with a pre-school establishment. The check on attendance is to be more flexible than in primary education and the usual penalties for non-attendance are not to apply. The outcome of the measure is therefore to give formal encouragement to attend a pre-school establishment without the compulsory obligation to attend regularly, recourse being had mainly to persuasion.

Lowering the age of compulsory school attendance to 5 years would doubtless lead some countries to include children of this age in the primary cycle, judging by some current trends, which will be discussed later. The United Kingdom is a separate case since, although the age of compulsory school attendance there is 5 years, children of that age attend an infant school, not a traditional primary school. As its name suggests, the infant school generally has a warm atmosphere and a play environment comparable to those in a good nursery school and it is in this climate that the child begins to learn basic intellectual skills at his own pace for two or three years. Simply lowering the age of compulsory school attendance in some continental countries would not necessarily bring them more into line with the English system. It would be more likely to move them further away from it since, within their existing primary school systems, neither teacher training methods, nor the procedures for appointing teachers and allocating them to classes, nor school administration, nor the facilities available are suitable for providing children from 5 to 8 years with an education other than the traditional primary education. For the situation to be otherwise, appropriate training of infant class teachers would be required, together with a different approach and special facilities such as those found in Scotland, where units comparable to infant schools are run within primary schools.

In parallel with this downward extension of schooling, but to a far more limited extent, establishments of the day nursery type have developed to take children from birth to 3 years whose mothers work or are in difficulty. In countries where the pre-school system does not take children as young as 3 years or has only an inadequate number of places for children of that age, the lack of facilities for children leaving the day nursery but not yet old enough to enter a pre-school establishment is deplored. The lack is felt all the more keenly because the child is used to being with other children and the mother is at work. This situation has led to a number of ventures in which consumer groups have been organized to remedy the lack of child-care facilities (formation of play groups, local child-minding centres, etc.).

In other countries where the nursery schools take children from 2 1/2 (Belgium) or 2 years (France), there is some overlap between two types of institution, with children of 2 to 3 years being able to attend either a day nursery or a nursery school. However, parental choice is limited in reality by the fact that fees are payable at the day nursery, which is far less widespread than the nursery school; in addition, the nursery school is free. Since the two institutions come under different administrative bodies, this state of affairs is often resented by the authorities at the Ministry of Health as an abusive extension of the sphere of activity for which the Ministry of Education is responsible.

Although pre-school education, in all its diversity, is in great demand in all European countries, the institutional forms which it takes and its educational objectives have for some years been called increasingly in question. Their adjustment to requirements and their effectiveness are being examined. Consideration of these pressures and the problems arising from them will be the subject of the following Chapters.

Chapter II

REAPPRAISAL OF THE NURSERY SCHOOL

Two major facts, which became increasingly apprent, roused the nursery school from its quietude:

(1) there is a correlation between family social level and the scholastic success of children;

(2) attainments in early childhood are of capital importance to the individual's future development.

Suddenly the pre-school establishment was regarded as the obvious means of compensating for 'socio-cultural handicaps', thereby leading to 'equality of opportunity'.

Interest thus being aroused, the nursery school expanded rapidly, to varying degrees, in most of the EC Member States (see Table 6). The expansion was generally effected without discrimination in countries where the Ministry of Education is developing this level of education fully as from 2, 3 or 4 years (Belgium, France, Ireland, Luxembourg, Netherlands) but with priority for the children of working mothers when the number of places for the youngest children was inadequate. Alternatively, it was effected with preference ('positive discrimination') for children in greatest need (in Denmark, for instance). However, it is generally the more privileged social classes who are particularly eager to avail themselves of pre-school facilities.

Attention has thus been drawn to the educational character of the nursery school and, in countries such as France, where it has long been recognized, it is acquiring new importance.

'Compensatory education' programmes for children from under-privileged backgrounds have arisen in almost all European countries.

Having failed to satisfy all the hopes placed in them, a reappraisal of the institution as a whole has followed, with criticism of the following points:

(1) unsuitable method of operation:
    (a) hours not in keeping with family requirements,
    (b) excessively large groups (see Table 7);

(2) expensive institution with a limited period of operation each year and each day, which makes it unprofitable (see Table 10);

(3) rigidity and uniformity of child-care facilities, which are badly adjusted to individual needs;

(4) institution which is not sufficiently accessible to families and the community;

(5) establishment which has inadequate connections with other institutions available in the service of children and families, in particular with the primary school;

(6) institution which encourages exclusive reproduction of a certain cultural pattern, thereby placing the children of certain social classes in a privileged position;

(7) teaching methods thought to be out of date or artificial, or too formal, or not sufficiently creative, or too poor, or not sufficiently aware of their objectives;

(8) establishment which is completely ineffective in some social environments and which should be replaced by other forms.

These somewhat radical points of criticism have led to experiments with new forms of pre-school education, which follow two major directions depending on whether they place greater emphasis on the social aspect or the teaching aspect of the problem.

A critical discussion of the new forms is given in the next two Chapters.

Chapter III

THE NURSERY SCHOOL: AN INTEGRATED SOCIAL SERVICE

Since the standard pre-school establishments (kindergartens, nursery schools, 'écoles maternelles'...) are unable to meet all the child-care and educational requirements of children whose mothers work all day or are in difficulties, the authorities have had to:

(1) extend the working hours of such establishments either by:
   (a) entrusting care of the children to different staff (sometimes very inadequately qualified) during the extra hours (a solution which has been practised in Belgium and France for some considerable time),
   or by
   (b) staggering the staff's working hours, where the staff is sufficiently numerous (in Denmark, for instance);

(2) extend the annual opening period, for instance by running some establishments as leisure centres during the summer;

(3) combine the pre-school establishment with other services for young children and families, such as day nurseries, long or short period child-minding centres, leisure centre or children's home, ante-natal and post-natal clinic, family planning, etc. This is the concept of the 'nursery centre' (France, Belgium) run by a multi-discipline team of teachers, psychologists, social workers, doctors, nurses, nursery nurses; similar projects are being tried in various countries (Denmark, England).

The centres have many advantages:

(1) Mothers do not have to find additional child-minders (neighbour, relative, approved child-minder). If possible, the pre-school establishment looks after the child throughout the mother's work period.

(2) Parents with several young children find all the various social services which they need in one place.

(3) Since the centres have combined services, they can make available to each unit the various services (social, medical, educational) of the full multi-discipline team.

(4) The facilities are more fully utilized, are placed more at the service of the community and make better provision for requirements.

(5) The children are not dragged from place to place. In one building or in adjacent buildings (children's restaurant, leisure centre) they find the

facilities and staff which meet their needs. Their life gains in unity and security.

However, this situation is not as beneficial to the child in practice as it appears to be in theory.

Each time the opening period of a pre-school establishment is extended, it is found that some children stay there throughout the full opening period. Below are some examples taken from three countries:

(1) in a nursery school in Coventry (United Kingdom) six children are present from 7 am to 5.45 pm;

(2) in a nursery school in Brussels 20 children (roughly one-tenth of the children on the register) are present from 7 am to 6 pm;

(3) in France, in a nursery school attached to a Social Centre, some children attend from 7.15 am to 7 pm; it should be noted that out of the 35 children accepted at this centre, there are ten whose families have a monthly income of more than FF 5 000 (ranging from FF 5 000 to 10 000).

It is thus the small children of pre-school age who spend the longest day away from home. In addition, the more difficult the child, the more the parents tend to leave it at the nursery for as long as possible, a situation which does not improve matters.

This state of affairs is not considered alarming by those who feel that many families are incapable of bringing up their children properly and that the longer such children are in institutions, the greater their educational chances. Yet in reality such children come to feel like instruders in their own home and to think that they are a nuisance. The results of special programmes for children from under-privileged backgrounds also show that the family's influence is still predominant and that it is important to take it into account.

Extension of the working hours of pre-school establishments often brings only the illusion of educational continuity since the hours attended by the adults are shorter than those attended by the children. When they are placed in the care of staff of a different status, the children may be upset when they are handed over by their teacher to staff filling in during the extension period. Frequently during these child-minding periods, only a small part of the building is available to the children, who sometimes have only a fairly empty playroom. Owing to insufficient or badly equipped space outdoors, bad weather, insufficient supervisory staff and the nursery routine, the children often remain inside the building for the eight or ten hours which they spend there.

Staggering the working hours of the teachers in charge, as is the practice in some countries, prevents interruptions in the routine of the establishment. On closer inspection, however, it is found that children with extreme hours nevertheless have their trials and tribulations. In one Danish nursery, for instance, there is one adult for the first arrivals at 6 am, three adults at 7 am and six adults at 8 am. Each time, groups are changed and moved about. The same process is repeated in the evening. In addition, three members of staff work half time and two work three-quarters of the time; it is therefore understandable that some children pass from hand to hand and from place to place in the course of a day for reasons outside their own wishes.

In this type of organization, despite the large number of adults employed (often with inadequate qualifications), it is difficult to create an intimate world, a world of unity and stable relations, if only because the pace of the child's life is not in keeping with that of the adults who come and go, arrive and depart, while the child stays there all the time.

In the present social context, these establishments are definitely of considerable advantage to families. The complex, overlapping work hours encourage team work, which is more difficult to achieve in organizations of the traditional type. Yet we still need to decide why and for whom the team is formed. Parents and teachers sometimes find it depressing to be left alone with very young children. Having several adults together makes the educational team more stimulating by superimposing communication at an adult's level on communication at a child's level. If care is not exercised, however, the result may be an educational machine made for greatest ease of handling the children, careful and solicitous though the handling might be. Nowhere is there any expression of the children's spirit. The buildings remain impersonal. They are used according to what is thought to be the best routine and the children are channelled into the narrow ways of a complex organization. Such a situation impedes the formation of patterns of relationships about a stable, emotional point; it is difficult to have well-established groups producing original projects and capable of bringing them to fruition over a period of time. Where freedom of play and movement do exist, it must not be just an illusion; the chaotic atmosphere which sometimes accompanies such freedom indicates that the children are unable to find a focal point.

It is for this reason that the biggest successes in education are often found in the more classical establishments, where simplicity of operation gives the child a framework which, in respect of time, space and emotions, is sufficiently stable to enable him to be self-motivating.

We are therefore bound to note that the benefit which a child gains from attending a pre-school establishment is not proportional to the time for which he attends each day. It is better to have a shorter, fuller day in an organization which is as simple as possible, so that changes of pace and activity can be occasioned by the children's wishes rather than by the constraints of the adults' complex time-table. The period of attendance each year and the number of years spent in a good pre-school establishment, on the other hand, have a positive influence on a child's development.

It is becoming increasingly obvious that the nursery school alone is unable to provide 'equality of opportunity' and that the development of pre-school education cannot save the expense of an adequate family policy. The latter must be something more than a simple redistribution of wealth and the provision of certain services as assistance. Apart from a more effective policy on incomes, housing, health, leisure, culture, it must also include family education, since training for the parental role is as important as training for a social and professional role. In the Netherlands provision is made for this training at the end of the secondary school and groups of students visit nursery schools for this purpose. In England and Scotland a growing number of secondary school pupils are given the opportunity to work in nursery schools.

This policy must be centred chiefly on the good of the child since in our society all categories of adults have rights and are bent on extending them, whereas small children have no rights and their life has to be continually adjusted to that of the adults who are bent on exercising theirs. Admittedly children's rights are sometimes contrary to the rights of parents and educators. The question of working hours is a good example of this. The need to adjust the working hours of the parents of young children so that they are more in line with normal school hours sometimes encounters opposition from professional organizations and women's movements, who are afraid that the consequences may have an adverse effect on equality of opportunity in their professional careers.

In some countries part-time work is the right of any man or woman who has children to bring up. Yet when the woman is a nursery school teacher, is this right, which is of benefit to her own children, still in the interests of those in her charge? In Belgium she is denied this right, in France it is granted to her. Yet French parents are scarcely happy to have their children in a class shared between two nursery teachers in succession; sometimes the teachers never meet owing to the long lunch break. In Italy the transition from part-time schooling to full-time schooling occasionally involves having two teachers in succession, with a joint overlap period in the middle of the day.

A family policy centred on the child would allow pre-school education to be organized for the good of the children and not the adults' convenience. It would become possible to change from the idea of the nursery school as a family substitute, for families unable to fulfil their role in every way, to the idea of the nursery school as an essential complement to education for every child. As we shall see later, the child would find in it what the family, which is in reality a completely different social entity, is unable to provide in quite the same way.

Although it should not be a substitute for the family, pre-school education can nevertheless provide for those families most in need of it a major social and educational support. This will be better achieved (see Chapter VI) if the nursery is itself geared completely to the true good of the child and does not reinforce disturbing tendencies prevalent in society and sometimes within families.

Chapter IV

THE NURSERY SCHOOL: FIRST STAGE IN THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

The discovery that failure at school is connected with a child's socio-cultural level not only helped to extend the social role of the pre-school establishment but also emphasized the importance of its educational role.

Depending on the history of pre-school institutions in each country and on the standard and type of staff training (see Chapter VIII), the educational role is pursued to varying extents in the different types of establishment, but covers only part of the educational needs of a young child. The present tendency is to provide far more educational stimuli from a very early age in the day nursery; this ambition is concerned in particular with activities of a cognitive type, which have been little developed so far, except in establishments which have been integrated into the educational system for some time and are staffed by teachers trained to a standard equivalent to that required for primary schools (France, United Kingdom, Ireland).

In so far as the educational aspect is gaining in strength, and objectives of an intellectual nature are being introduced, the pre-school establishment risks increasingly to becoming a place of preparation for school, facilitating the transition from informal family education to more formal school education. It seems therefore that it ought to be part of the educational system, that it should be linked as closely as possible to primary education and that it should be free like the latter.

In view of this, when pre-school attendance is at its optimum (Belgium, France, Luxembourg, Netherlands), the problem of lowering the age of compulsory school attendance arises, and with it that of determining the age at which it is advisable to begin primary school.

In all the EC Member States, steps are being taken towards better integration of pre-school education into the educational system.

In countries in which establishments for young children are not under its control, the Ministry of Education is beginning to develop free pre-school classes in primary schools, such as the 'Børnehaveklasser' for 6 year-olds (in Denmark). In the Federal Republic of Germany 'Vorklassen' for 5 year-olds and 'Eingangstufen' for 5 and 6 year-olds have been set up on an experimental basis; it seems that they are to be limited to 5% in number, since the kindergarten (generally under the control of the Ministry of Social Affairs and taking children up to 6 years) is the most widespread type of establishment and, apparently, affords the most advantages, as we shall see later.

For the last ten years Italy has been developing a State nursery school, integrated into the educational system, for children from 3 to 6 years. In countries in which it has been integrated into the educational system for some considerable time, it is found that the nursery school is trying to attract an ever increasing number of ever young children. In France the Ministry of Education aims to have 80% of 2-year-olds at school by 1980. In Belgium, the Ministry of Education was unable to extend the opportunity of attending a nursery school to children of 2 years, because of opposition encountered from the staff of both day nurseries and nursery schools, who preferred the solution of a 'pre-school nursery unit' ('pré-gardiennat') for children from 18 months to 2 1/2 or 3 years. It is true that the standards applicable to Belgian nursery schools do not stipulate the provision of special rest rooms and ancillary staff to assist the teachers responsible for very young children. Consequently they are generally less well equipped than French nursery schools to take very young children and in both countries the maximum number of children permitted (30 present on average in Belgium, 35 on the register in France) often makes the care of very young children difficult. Despite this, many schools in Belgium are beginning to admit children of 2 1/2 years.

In Ireland, Luxembourg and the Netherlands the pre-school integrated into the educational system is concerned only with children of 4 and 5 years. In two German Länder the education of children from 3 to 6 years, which is separate from that of children from birth to 3 years, comes under the authority of the Ministry of Education and Culture.

Apart from extension of the pre-school sector integrated into the educational system, there are efforts to improve such integration. Since it is easier to link nursery school and primary school when they are both under the same administration, the majority of measures to improve the link have mostly been taken when the need for them was not so pressing, overall administrative integration having already taken place.

In a number of countries, this link is no longer regarded as a particular problem since it is being considered as part of the reform of the educational system as a whole. The measures taken or planned are consequently of a rather radical nature. In the search for educational continuity, every effort is made to achieve a link of maximum flexibility so that the child's transition from one level to another is accomplished without upset and at the time best suited to him.

Much remains to be done, but in every country contact between teachers in the two levels has been encouraged, sometimes most explicitly (e.g. France, Ministerial Circular of 4 October 1977). Contact has taken the form of joint meetings on educational subjects, exchange visits between teachers, either alone or with their pupils, joint activities or outings, school correspondence, exchanges of information (work accomplished, individual record cards on pupils, school files).

The annual rotation of teachers from the top nursery school section and the first year primary, and even occasional or regular exchanges (a few hours each week), present problems when the level of training and the status of the teachers are not the same. Following the lines of the recommendations of the Council of Europe, which has held several symposia on this subject, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Belgium are moving towards a standard initial training of teachers of both levels, with at least a common base, the same status, same salary and same subsequent training opportunities (this equivalence was achieved a long time ago in France and also applies in Ireland and the United Kingdom). Owing to the financial implications of the plan, some countries are having to spread its implementation over several years. Too few retraining courses for teachers of both levels have been organized as yet.

Joint training facilitates programmes giving continuity of study. In countries where the distribution of official educational guidelines is not contrary to the principle of freedom in teaching (valued in the UK and the Netherlands), draft programmes of this type are being studied (in most of the German Länder). France has just issued guidelines for the first year of the elementary school (1976) and for the nursery school (1977) which try to establish better continuity.

It is thought by some that perfect continuity can only be achieved in one school under a single head. In the Netherlands it is intended to apply experiments with a 'first school' or foundation school for children from 4 to 12 years on a general basis (even though the experimental phase has not been completed and the results have not been assessed). Administrative integration is supported by joint supervision of teaching owing to reorganization of the inspection divisions, which all became mixed in January 1978. In France mixed divisions are gradually being established (see Chapter X).

In England some nursery schools (for children of 3 and 4 years) are combined with infant schools (for children of 5, 6 and 7 years) and sometimes both are integrated into primary schools.

As far as the children are concerned, attempts are being made to find more flexible solutions than having all the children move up together once a year on the basis of age, using the dangerous corrective measures of keeping a child down in the nursery school or having it skip a year. The formation of intermediate classes ('classes d'attente', 'Schulkindergarten'), worthwhile in some cases of immaturity of character, sometimes present the same moving-up problem.

In England children often move up three times a year. It is only possible within a highly flexible educational framework. It is easier with classes containing mixed age groups (in this way the number of units removed or added is not too large) and the teachers have to know how to organize the class into small groups so that they can welcome the groups of newcomers, having shown the others how to work by themselves.

In other countries efforts have been made to achieve maximum flexibility and continuity by eliminating the dividing line (generally occurring at 6 years) between pre-school and primary education by setting up a study cycle straddling both levels. During this cycle the learning of basic intellectual skills can be prepared for and carried through with maximum continuity of method, so avoiding marking time and repeating years. The cycle is as follows:

- from 5 to 6 years: phase of initiation to learning by development of the necessary skills;
- from 6 to 7 years: actual learning phase;
- from 7 to 8 years: learning consolidation phase.

So that progression through the cycle is very flexible, it is advisable to use methods which group children of different ages together. Such groups are also of advantage to the social development of the children. It is worth noting that these solutions have been suggested and are being tried in the very countries (Belgium, France) in which nursery schools have generally opted against mixed age groups (most definitely preferred in Luxembourg and the Federal Republic of Germany, and to a lesser extent in the Netherlands and Italy) and in which the 'top classes' have clearly been more concerned with instruction, owing to the children being of the same age (5 years).

If mixed age groups are achieved by 'removing the partitions' between classes in the cycle, teachers are led to collaborate more closely; it is hoped that the result will be mutual enrichment and greater consistency of teaching.

In Belgium 39 schools have begun to experiment with the 5 to 8 years cycle. Thanks to the warm welcome given me by the administrative authorities and the teaching staff, I was able to see some of the experiments for myself. They vary enormously since freedom of interpretation was allowed and the result is a wide variety of methods of application.

Like any experiment which starts with particularly well motivated teachers, the Belgian experiment has many positive aspects, including at least mutual enrichment of the teachers from team work. But this is a separate issue from the 5 to 8 cycle as such. I should therefore like to report mainly on the difficulties encountered by the teachers and the consequences involved for the children in the cycle and for the link-up between the nursery school and the primary school.

The vast majority of teachers taking part in the experiment had no previous experience of modern educational techniques such as working in small groups, individual teaching, informal methods which encourage independence and creativity, use of group projects and the establishment of group personalities, consideration of children's motives, etc. The instigators of the experiment, who had seen 'open plan' schools in operation in other countries, doubtless hoped that establishing the cycle would lead quite naturally to the new form of teaching. It is interesting to note that the teachers often find a different solution. The majority adopt a system which enables them to re-establish the conditions in which they know how to teach, namely those of traditional education. The following observations were made:

(1) For the purpose of teaching the basic intellectual skills (reading, writing, arithmetic), lack of experience of working in groups sometimes led the teachers to form as many large groups of a uniform level as there were teachers in the experiment. The groups were then rearranged as often as was necessary to maintain maximum uniformity. In the case of children at the nursery level, we found that sometimes all the children are taught to read systematically because the teachers do not know how to establish otherwise whether the child is ready to read or not (if several choices were offered simultaneously in the same place, the children who are not ready would make spontaneously for what is closest to their level and interest). Consequently, some children lacking in maturity are likely to undergo this systematic learning process for several years. In other cases, and occasionally under pressure from the parents, children of 5 years are moved into a higher group, i.e. with children aged 6 years on average, and the nursery school teacher is left, as one of them put it, 'with the less stimulating and less interesting children'. These two approaches (which

are not general) reproduce in the new structure the very situations which it was intended to avoid.

(2) Groups of different levels are formed for all other activities, thus emphasizing the dichotomy between basic skills and other activities, whereas they should be continuous. Efforts are often made to overcome this fault by adopting joint interest projects for all the cycle. However, when it comes to executing a project, which is mostly launched by the teacher with a number of instructions for the duration of a session, the teachers experience difficulty in maintaining everyone's interest and complain in particular of being unable to adjust to the little ones who, since they have no mastery of basic skills, cannot be occupied in the same way and hold the others back. In general, nursery-school teachers seem more at ease in these situations than their colleagues in the primary school.

(3) In everyone's opinion, one of the major advantages of the experiment is a wider variety of activities, chiefly in the field of arts. However, because the teachers have little experience of conducting several simultaneous activities, which extend over several days, there is a tendency to specialize. Sometimes, because of her particular abilities, the nursery school teacher is made responsible for teaching music and movement and drama throughout the cycle. We saw one teacher who, every week, repeats the same lessons four times to four mixed age groups in succession. Alternatively, use is made of volunteer parents who, instead of coming to help, are given full responsibility for an activity, sometimes in a separate room. When specialist teachers come in (music, physical training), they are not generally incorporated into the team and teachers do not attend their lessons. This state of affairs divides education into separate disciplines; this is quite contrary to the objectives of a rounded education for young children.
The teaching staff is also sometimes reinforced by calling on the oldest children, who are then used as monitors to go over exercises whith the youngest children. Although this practice is of benefit to social development, the exercises are mostly prepared by the adult and the older children only check the work so that the activity in itself is only of interest to the teacher.

(4) With a view largely to the effective formal teaching of basic intellectual skills, some schools, without hesitation, completely joined up five or six classes of the cycle although an open-plan system was out of the question owing to the layout of the classrooms, which were on different floors in some cases or even in different buildings. Under such conditions the children are not able to circulate freely. At given times there is a great general commotion while everyone, teachers and pupils alike, changes group, just as in traditional secondary schools. When, as we have seen, mixed age groups are also changed every week, then on Monday mornings the youngest children have difficulty in finding their group and tend to go back to the teacher they had in the previous week.

(5) In some schools, where there was more awareness of the problems involved, no more than three classes at a time were joined together and they were only combined on a full-time basis if the classrooms communicated with each other to at least the minimum extent required to encourage freedom of movement and choice on the part of the children. Il is important to note that flexibility was considered impossible without the adoption of a common timetable. Consequently the 5-year-olds had to spend long periods of time on mathematical activities, for instance, just like the older children. Physical education was no longer part of the day's routine and

the youngest children only had physical education occasionally. On the other hand, they attended lessons on ethics, religion, history or geography, which are included in the primary school's timetable.

We can see from the above that, owing to the lack of flexibility of know-how, the desire for educational continuity is interpreted in terms of uniformity (uniformity of timetable and pace) and that the flexibility desired mostly takes the form of extreme complexity of organization, together with other forms of constraint and inflexibility. Owing to lack of understanding of what is meant by a rounded education, team work is interpreted as a division of labour with the teacher losing control of the educational process as a whole (moving towards the sort of alienation experienced by the factory worker!).

These experiments are still in their early stages and can be corrected and improved. Some also followed more prudent methods, but the trend is towards as complete an open-plan system as possible.

There is much to be learnt from both the positive and the negative aspects of the Belgian experiment, which is fascinating in its diversity. We chose to analyse some of its difficulties because they seem to throw light on one important point. At present there may be a growing conviction throughout the world that a change of programme is not enough to alter education, but the belief that a change of structure is enough is also taking hold. Yet teachers can quite well establish their old habits within the new structure. It is questionable whether they will then be in the best position to learn what it was hoped they would learn.

Those whom we saw in difficulty are not in a position to learn the new forms of education for two reasons. Firstly, their contact with the children is inadequate and intermittent, owing to the large number of constantly changing groups. Secondly, they are not allowed enough freedom to make their own adjustments, being only cogs in the teaching machine. A different situation applies when a teacher is master of the modern teaching methods and knows how to apply them in his own way to a class of mixed age groups. Under his influence the children come to form a small community with its own personality. Opening this group to another group or immersing it in a larger community is then achieved smoothly, flexibly and with no loss of group personality. If, however, putting the cart before the horse, the structure is changed before teachers and children have acquired the means of mobility within it, then the result is the contradictions of having to organize spontaneity, direct autonomy and formalize flexibility!

Feeling his way using the means available to him (drawing on his own experience) will enable the teacher to master new teaching methods gradually and independently. Application of this principle to the teaching experiment treats the teacher in the way it is hoped he will treat his pupils.

If the 'open-plan' method is quickly accepted, it will doubtless be because it follows the modern trend towards community ways of life. But it is in no way a panacea. The child's spontaneity, independence and freedom can only be guaranteed by the simplest school organization possible, with changes of groups, movement within the building and switches to other activities resulting from consideration of the children's wishes and not from the constraints of the system established by the adults, even though it may be 'open-plan'.

If we remember that the Belgian experiment is being carried out with skilled volunteers, a special framework and smaller classes, we can imagine what might result from suddenly applying it throughout the system. The Belgian Ministry of Education is following the experiment closely and the authorities whom we met seem fully aware of the difficulties involved. Everyone is sure that, once an overall assessment can be made, this interesting experiment will supply an abundance of assorted information, since some of the stumbling-blocks mentioned here are obviously not helping to achieve the objectives of the project. At the beginning of 1978, the Belgian Ministry of Education asked the Experimental Teaching Laboratory of the University of Liège to make a scientific assessment of the experiment. The Laboratory is preparing tests of linguistic, mathematical and conceptual skills specifically for this 5- to -8 years age group in order to help the teachers to assess the effects of their teaching. To obtain a truly adequate assessment of the experiment as a whole, however, it must be possible to distinguish between what is due to:

(1) the change of teaching methods;

(2) the establishment of a cycle;

(3) the choice of the 5- to -8 years cycle.

There is nothing to prevent the belief that similar results might be obtained simply by changing the methods or establishing a 4- to -7 years or 6- to -9 years cycle, for instance.

As far as the problem of interest to us here is concerned, the establishment of a 5- to -8 years cycle organized as a fully closed unit does not resolve the difficulties involved in moving up from the nursery school to the primary school. It simply postpones them and creates a further moving up problem between the end of the cycle and the remainder of the primary school.

If groups of children are at the stage at which two teaching cycles join and if it is thought that the open-plan system can facilitate the move from one cycle to another, then the open-plan system should be established in both directions to open up the cycles to each other. Some schools taking part in the Belgian experiment felt this need and maintained some contact between the 5-year-olds and the younger children. Apart from this, if the nursery is to be a form of preparation for the primary school, is the preparation to begin at only 5 years of age? In the Federal Republic of Germany, where the kindergartens often have mixed groups (3 to 6 years), it is felt that the child is being prepared throughout this period for admission to the primary school by development of his whole self.

The school in the new town of Elancourt, France, is an example of the open-plan system being established in both directions. Here 14 classes (ten primary and four nursery) occupy a huge ground floor where everything is open-plan. The children are divided into classes in the traditional way, with 'horizontal' mixing between classes of children of the same age and 'vertical 'mixing' with older or younger children the rest of the time. The children from the top nursery classes (5 years) are sometimes with the 6-year-olds in the preparatory class (e.g. for a joint singing lesson or for drawing or painting taught to varying standards) but at other times they are with the children from the middle nursery classes (4-year-olds), with whom they have interests in common. Exchanges of teachers, with some occasionally taking the children from a different level, tend not towards specialization but towards diversification. Very small groups can be formed for the purpose of teaching intellectual skills to the children of a given year and for remedial teaching for slow learners, not only because the teacher in charge and the remedial teacher move from group to group, but above all because the most advanced children work alone, having been made sufficiently independent.

It is also important that vertical mixing should not be systematic and routine; it should result instead from children's projects, with each child being sometimes the older and sometimes the younger. In another French school in the department of Yvelines, some children from the top nursery classes and a preparatory class from the primary school visit each other and exchange messages. For instance one day the preparatory class asks the top nursery class to draw different sorts of fish for them in a certain way for their 'aquarium'. The younger children draw the fish and one day get them back stuck onto a picture to which both groups have contributed. This gives the younger children the opportunity to fall in with the older children's wishes. Another day, the younger children discover a phoneme (i) and are not sure how to write it. They therefore send representatives to the older class to find out and then come back and explain what they have seen and learnt. On another occasion the younger children send the older children a story which they have made up or recorded on tape. The older children turn it into a play and ask the younger children to help with the scenery, etc.

In these examples, each level retains its own specific character but efforts are made to build bridges between the two. Where integration is carried to extremes, birdges are no longer necessary and each level tends to lose its specific character. The desire for perfect continuity leads to the desire for imperceptible transition stages and complete unity throughout the school. In view of this, the problems involved in moving up from one level to another no longer apply because the extremely fluid system quite simply eliminates them. It would be interesting to know what character the resulting mixed groups would assume and whether or not one outcome would be to turn the nursery school gradually into a primary school. Although such a state of fusion has not been reached, this outcome is feared in the Netherlands, where the main people concerned (teachers and inspectors specializing in nursery schools) have nevertheless given a favourable welcome to the reform because it brings them equality of status and salary.

The Belgian experiment deliberately treats 5-year-olds as if they were at primary school in that it has chosen to put them in with primary school children; moreover, the primary school has a very strong tradition of formal education. Since the main reason for the interest in linking the nursery school with the primary school is the high scholastic failure rate in the first year of the primary school, it is not surprising that the educational concerns of the primary school should invade the nursery school to an increasing extent. Even when the nursery school refuses to begin to teach the children to read, exercises in preparation for reading lead to more systematic activities and to a form of formal teaching, for which there is little justification. There is now a flourishing market which provides an ever increasing number of teaching cards for this purpose. Sometimes the children have to fill in such cards several times a day. Systematic preparation for logical-mathematical thinking now begins quite commonly in the bottom classes of the nursery school in France and Belgium.

At present, the trend towards continuity and early instruction, which is so pronounced in some countries, runs counter to previous practices. There are efforts to replace a school career involving periods of waiting, periods of intensive preparation for examinations and periods of moving up with a continuous, smooth progression, which takes the child from nursery school to university in complete security by a series of imperceptible transitions. There may be reason to fear the soothing pleasantness of the latter course. In some countries the pressure of schooling, with its succession of restrictive exercises, is obviously weighing increasingly heavily on very young children, whose right to play had at last been fully recognized.

Even if the course of a child's life proceeds without sudden changes, there are still mental characteristics peculiar to different stages of life, and fairly strong upheavals occur, against a background of continuity, during the transition from infancy to childhood and from childhood to adolescence. It is difficult to define precise thresholds, but a break at 5 years is no more justifiable than at 6. In every country this question is tied up with the age at which it is thought that children ought to begin to learn to read; generally the primary school claims responsibility for this task. The problem is further obscured by the fact that efforts are being made to create continuity by imposing external forms (institutions, methods, programmes) rather than by following the guiding principles of child education. When it comes to discussing the problem of moving up from nursery school to primary school, we find ourselves caught up in a web of contradictions, the most flagrant of which are:

(1) We say that we must prepare children to live in a world of perpetual change, yet we want to establish a single-school system so that they will not have to experience changes.

(2) We find the large built-up areas of new towns depersonalizing and dehumanizing yet we want to do away with small schools and have comprehensive schools, in which it is difficult to avoid uniformity and the stresses arising from having large numbers of children together.

(3) We say we must adjust to small children yet at the same time, for reasons of a purely scholastic nature, we try to adapt the child to the demands of school at an even earlier age.

(4) We claim to want to give every child 'equality of opportunity' yet, from the way in which we organize a 'flexible moving-up system' on the basis of criteria still dominated by scholastic requirements, we are more likely to emphasize inequalities in an unchanged school.

(5) We say that young children have a lot of latent talents yet, instead of trying to bring them out by diversifying activities to cover a wider variety of abilities (which might help to provide 'equality of opportunity'), we try chiefly to bring forward the acquisition of traditional scholastic skills.

(6) We believe that one of the essential aims of education is to develop a child's independence yet we forget to ask if the independence of teachers and institutions involved in creative education is not a prerequisite for this.

While we have to admit that a completely independent, separate, self-contained nursery school is not a good thing, it is to be feared that a fully integrated, annexed nusery school, which has lost all its independence, is not much better. In Ireland pre-school classes for 4- and -5-year-olds have always been attached to primary schools and the tendency has been to teach reading and writing as from four years. In order to create a more congenial atmosphere for children from disadvantaged backgrounds and to reduce their failure rate at school, the Ministry of Education set up the Rutland Street experimental project outside the primary school. The purpose of the project is again to establish more suitable teaching methods which might renew education in pre-school classes. In France the 'infant classes' have been separated from the primary schools to form, by degrees, more independent nursery schools, in which more suitable teaching methods can be developed. Their teaching methods have gained quite a reputation.

In order to determine if, from the point of view of scholastic success, it is better to educate young children in independent, non-scholastic establishments (kindergartens) or in classes which prepare the children for primary school ('Vorklassen' for children of 5 years or 'Eingangstufen' for mixed groups of 5 and 6 years), the various German Länder have made a comparative study covering a period of five years, with the assistance of university researchers. In North-Rhine-Westphalia, the results of the study, which have just been published, tend to show that the advantages of strict preparation for primary school are lost after a few months and that in general, over a period of several years, the children from the kindergartens are more successful in primary school than those from pre-school classes. In other Länder (in Bavaria, for instance), similar results have been obtained and mixed age groups are apparently better. In several Länder, the 'Vorklassen' have been discontinued and the experimental 'Eingangstufen' are being terminated this year.

The Federal Committee, which is examining the whole of this research, feels that it cannot yet reach a final conclusion. The problem is highly complex and is bound up with the history of education in each Land. It has financial implications since the development of pre-school classes (if they are limited to teaching children of age 5) is less costly than that of kindergartens, provided they only take children from age 5. On the other hand, the latter are very often preferred by families, because they offer a wider service. Interests of a corporate nature are also involved. In some Länder, as in some European countries, a decline in the number of children at primary school makes its extension desirable, to the detriment of pre-school establishments.

Apart from the recommendations for better continuity with regard to those concerned - staff and groups of children - the Federal German Committee notes the need for better teaching at both levels of education.

This is the heart of the matter. The more pre-school education is successful and able to create congenial conditions for young children, with a rich variety of activities to which the children give their all, the less it is tempted to practise early learning. Similarly, when a primary school has solved its own problems and has learnt in particular how to teach basic skills without difficulty, it does not try to blame its failures on the nursery school and to extend its dominance to the youngest children.

In France, in a district where the rate of repeating a year in the preparatory class (first year primary) was 23.2% for all schools, an inspector succeeded in reducing this rate to 11.54% in four years, firstly by evolving new methods in those schools with the worst problem, and by making the entire teaching body more aware. He hopes to be able to improve results further.

In the previous section we showed that the nursery school cannot be used to save the expense of an adequate social policy. Here we would say that it cannot be used to save the expense of a proper revision of the primary school. At present, for want of facing up to the problems and trying to resolve them, it is apparently hoped that, by mixing the years as part of a policy of carrying continuity to the utmost, some fortunate osmosis will enable each year to acquire all that is best from the other. It is also to be feared that it will take only the worst. In the tendency to make the nursery school more like the primary school, it is in fact the artificial, uninteresting, systematic exercises which are being introduced into the nursery school. The primary school for its part does not always seem to gain from the osmosis the means to make its teaching more stimulating, less formal and more effective. Instead it chooses to copy the most indeterminate and dullest of nursery schools, those which are frequently aimless and ineffectual, out of line with educational requirements and in which the teaching is seldom stimulating and effective. The result is often an alarmingly slower rate of progress in the primary classes, in which the learning of basic skills tends increasingly to be spread over several years. Yet effective learning must take place quickly in a lively, dynamic atmosphere. Instead of lengthy methods, highly stimulating methods should be sought to produce the accumulation of experience which speeds up the learning process. When the process is slow, the child is operating at minimum ability and effectiveness for want of discovering quickly the economy of mental effort which leads to mastery.

For all the above reasons we feel that each level should retain its own specific character. It is better able to do this if the levels enjoy mutual independence, and independence in no way means being isolated and shut off.

Leaving aside extreme solutions which, as we have just seen, are aimed more at getting rid of the problem rather than at solving it, the levels must be linked not merged. Those who are inclined towards solutions which tend to 'institutionalize' this link to a large degree retain a typically traditional attitude. They believe that situations can be imposed from the outside, without taking the peculiarities of individuals into account.

It is the children who present the link-up problem. Its solution must be based on them, as creatures who are taking shape and developing, who come from somewhere, are now in a different place and will be going somewhere else.

It is they who are preparing themselves for a change or who retain past links in a new situation. We can help them to find their own way of doing this by taking as a basis their own feelings and ideas at the prospect and by giving them the opportunity to develop so that they can master the situation to the best of their ability. By giving prime importance to continuity of the teaching programme and continuity of organization (which are in fact of secondary importance), we show that we attach greater value to the smooth running of the teaching machine than to the children themselves. A social, living experience (reproducing the great upheaval of birth at another level of life), an experience which could be exciting and triumphant, is reduced to a trite, scholastic level.

When parents have to leave their children, some just slip away in secret and others talk to the children to prepare them for the separation. The way in which some people wish to organize the link between nursery school and primary school is mindful of the attitude of the former set of parents. The child must not be aware of anything, above all of the fact that he has grown up or is growing up.

A link centred on the child must not be established professionally; it must be related to existence. The teachers of both levels must be encouraged to take as their basis the actual, live situations in which they and the children find themselves. All the forms of contact listed in this section are excellent, provided they are not of a purely professional nature, lacking the intense motivation of children. Similarly, during joint teacher training courses, all the more technical aspects of continuity should be viewed afresh, bearing the social, living aspects of the situation in mind.

To sum up, we feel that the problem of the link between nursery school and primary school is best dealt with in terms of independence at all levels - children's independence, teachers' independence, independence of the two levels of education.

Independence, which in no way means absolute freedom, is always related to an area of experience. For instance, a baby is independent in the way he fits together what he perceives, within the biological limits of the species. Similarly, the teacher, who, in the performance of his job, is society's representative, cannot teach what he likes (this would risk exposing the children to any despot and to any form of handling) but he must enjoy some independence in the way in which he fulfils a role defined in advance by society. In fact, the greater his independence, the better he is able to adapt his methods to the particular realities he faces.

Trying to establish continuity at the institutional level offers no guarantee, since institutions can be quite inadequate. Continuity must be established by a constant desire to adjust to the children's mentality, needs and aspirations at each stage of their development, on the understanding, of course, that their needs and aspirations are in keeping with the social setting of which the school itself is part.

We must therefore guard against establishing monolithic institutions ill-suited to adjustment to a wide variety of needs. In particular, bringing nursery schools into line with primary schools involves two risks. Firstly there is the risk of making the nursery school like the primary school - a particularly undesirable risk when the primary school has not been brought sufficiently up to date. Secondly, there is the risk of further removal from an overall solution to the problems of young children, since the young child's need for care, protection, play, rest and specific education cannot be met by the operating standards of primary schools. There is then the risk of subjecting young children to a number of regimes; this again is not the ideal form of educational continuity. This is the reason why German families generally prefer kindergartens to pre-school classes, even though the latter are free.

The important problem of continuity must consequently not be viewed solely with the primary school in mind. Factors of equal importance to the nursery school are its links with the day nursery (not studied in this report which, as indicated in the Introduction, falls within the scope of a Resolution of the Council, which fixed its terms of reference), with families and the environment (studied in Chapter VI) and with the different social services concerned with young children.

Chapter V

THE NURSERY SCHOOL AS GUARANTEE OF A YOUNG CHILD'S RIGHTS

The majority of children's problems come from pressures brought to bear on them by family and school, or from a lack of suitable educational activities.

Since the nursery school teacher's emotional relation with the child is not as direct and personal as that of the parents, in whose case it is sometimes too intense, and since the nursery school teacher is free from all the educational concerns of the primary school teacher, she can more easily create for the children a relaxed environment centred on them and in which their young personalities can blossom fully.

It is not only because it is spacious and well equipped with educational toys that the nursery school is now necessary for young children, who these days mostly lack space and adequate stimulation at home. It is also because it provides an environment in which their own ways of thinking and feeling can prevail and come fully into their own.

In every country the importance of the nursery school to the young child's social development is generally recognized. However, this term is sometimes used in too negative and restrictive a sense. It is thought that the child must learn to tolerate his neighbour and make concessions to him (in the image of a competitive society, in which aggressive tendencies must be repressed by force) and that he must learn the disciplined ways of community life (in the image of a society which brings communal interests and individual interests into opposition, instead of being a community in which each person feels enriched by the presence of the others).

When a particularly sensitive, skilful, competent adult is seen with a number (regrettably large sometimes) of 2- and -3-year-olds, in a harmonious atmosphere, when the group is found to be free from aggressiveness, then the term 'social development' assumes a more positive meaning.

Such results are rarely achieved, because the educators of young children generally see child psychology as no more than a diagrammatic series of mental stages, through which a child must pass as quickly as possible. For instance, many believe that self-centredness is a fault which must be corrected in a child, whereas it is his way of relating to the universe from his own experience. It is the source of all the traits of a child's mentality; the child understands things by comparing them with himself and by projecting himself. This his 'animism' corresponds to his becoming aware of himself as a being gifted with will-power, and his artificiality to his becoming aware of himself as 'homo faber'.

A child's rights include the right to his own ways of thinking and feeling, but they can flourish properly only in a society of peers. Natural reinforcement and refinement of the child's ways come through the skilful mediation of sensitive, receptive adults, who are capable of educating children by cultivating the latter's own rich resources.

The development of nursery schools has revealed previously unsuspected aspects of the young child's possibilities, and it is not by chance that a child draws better, with more fullness, force and skill, in a good nursery school than at home.

When the child's social development is viewed in a wholly positive way, it is like yet another children's right. It gives him his first taste of independence from the family together with the joys of participating in a small community, which is made for him and like him, and which is geared down to his level of resourcefulness.

This cannot be achieved either:

(1) in inflexible, artificial, standardized establishments, which regard children as coming all from the same abstract category instead of seeing in them the immense variety of their individuality; or

(2) in establishments organized largely for the social convenience of adults; or

(3) in establishments which take children, not on the basis of their present needs, but with a view to their future scholastic requirements.

The concept of the nursery school as family substitute or as a place of preparation for school must be replaced by another, centred on the children themselves as they are at this age and with their own world of relations.

At present there is a marked tendency to consider the child, not in terms of his present life and own experience, but according to future standards. Consequently, before they are even at nursery school, some children are already regarded as having some ground to make up, on account of their social background!

This race to scholastic success is leading to ever earlier preparation of children for the learning process, which is not due to take place until one, two or, in some cases, even three years later. The young child is thus becoming increasingly involved in activities which can scarcely be of great interest to him, since he is not yet psychologically ready to begin the learning process. This makes him less able to occupy himself in his own way and its detrimental effect on his independence is not offset by what little benefit he gains from this artificial form of instruction. Nursery schools are beginning to follow a planned programme of extremely precise objectives, which they try to achieve by restrictive, systematic processes involving 'continuous assessment' and 'prompt remedial treatment'. Some nursery schools have even banned the word 'play' (if not play itself!); 'play' is not sufficiently serious-minded and might give the impression that the children are not being made to work enough.

The ambition of some parents pushes the children in the same direction. A report by one expert contains the claim that parents should be shown the teaching methods used in nursery schools so that at home, for instance, 'play with logic blocks does not degenerate [sic!] into an ordinary game with building bricks'. Thus, while homework for primary school children has been abolished in many countries, nursery school children, who are often the ones who spend the longest day at school, still have to do exercises at home to be better prepared for primary school!

All the above factors show that the freedom of young children is being increasingly threatened. It is therefore time to organize pre-school education to provide a better guarantee of their freedom.

A child immersed in exploratory play is exercizing all his faculties. The nursery school can best educate a young child by learning to join in his play, stimulate it from within, renew it, enrich it and enlarge it with the social dimension which it can acquire in the context of pre-school education.

We must admit that too few nursery schools have yet learnt to use children's play knowledgeably for the purpose of really effective education. Yet by establishing its own specific character more securely, pre-school education will be better able to avoid the two dangers referred to in previous sections, namely the danger of invasion and the danger of annexation. The danger of invasion comes from the parents, whose role (while important in other ways!) is not to replace educators even if their presence in nursery schools is necessary; the danger of annexation comes from the primary school, to which the nursery school would be but a means of entry. For this reason, we repeat, the nursery school must be sufficiently independent to be in the service not of either family or school but of the young child.

However, the whole of the young child's relations with his environment must be considered together with his gradual development. Relations with the day nursery, with school, with the family and the environment are therefore essential, especially since some families need to be instructed and supported in their educational role.

We may wonder if the nursery school is capable of assuming such a role. The clashes of interests between children and adults, which are multiplied within a society in which everyone claims for himself the right to total fulfilment, are also likely to occur within a nursery school. We have already given one example of this in staff working hours, and, at the nursery as much as at home, the child may run the risk of suffering from the abuse of authority, neglect or lack of understanding.

Since the establishments concerned are organized or controlled by official authorities, it is normal to expect from them the guarantees which cannot be expected from every family, since some families, left to themselves, prove incapable of assuming their educational role. By careful administration and above all by a very high standard of teacher training (see Chapter VIII), we can hope to organize the nursery school to give the best guarantee of children's rights.

These rights need to be reconsidered in the light of the pronounced social changes which are taking place. The International Year of the Child could provide the occasion for critical examination of the Charter, which will then be 20 years old, and for proposal of the necessary amendments.

Chapter VI

THE NURSERY SCHOOL OPEN TO THE COMMUNITY

Difficulties in adapting children from 'fringe area' populations to school systems with official standards, teaching methods which have become too exclusive to the profession and the ever-increasing establishment of corporate interests, which are not always in the children's interests, have made people aware of the dangers of a nursery school closed in on itself, which ultimately gives the impression that the child must be made for it, for its convenience and its standards, instead of it being made for the child. The younger the child, the greater the danger.

In keeping with the recommendations of the Council of Europe, some countries have taken steps towards greater parental participation in the life or management of nursery schools. This is particularly true of those countries with no tradition of parental participation. In Italy state nursery schools have been involved in the election of 'organi collegiali' (decree of 31 May 1974) and provisionally the elections have been held within the framework of the primary teaching 'circoli' pending the decrees for organization of the public nursery school established by the law of 10 September 1969. Quite a large number of women figured both in the lists and among those elected (especially in northern Italy) but the proportion of men was much higher. The most active proved to be members of the upper or upper middle social classes. Parental participation led to numerous exchanges of ideas and improved school relations with the community. The lack of regular contact between representatives and electors after the elections and splits within the corporate assemblies - splits which often reflected opposing political opinions - are deeply regretted, however.

In France, implementation of the decree of 28 December 1976 introducing the establishment of a 'teachers council' (already in existence), a 'parents' committee' and a 'school council', formed by combining the first two, in every nursery school and elementary school was initially delayed by an order to abstain from the trade union organizations. The parents' federations, already very politically minded, took up the power struggle. If the danger of excessive political involvement can be avoided, it is hoped that the school councils will have a beneficial influence, will open up the schools, which are traditionally very closed, will provide support in the common quest for more satisfactory school conditions and will give the teachers better knowledge of the children's backgrounds.

Similarly in the Federal Republic of Germany, the parents of the pre-school classes (Vorschulklassen) integrated into primary schools elect representatives to the school's parents' council ('Elternbeirat'). In five German Länder, this representation is prescribed by law for all kindergartens; in the others it is organized voluntarily.

In Denmark parents participate in running the school through their representatives but, in order to achieve closer cooperation between management, staff and parents, joint management experiments have been undertaken in 20 establishments, with the agreement of the official authorities.

For very young children and for very small establishments, such as many nursery schools, such formal contact is not always the most suitable. It is direct contact about each particular child which is essential. Furthermore, the parents with whom the nursery school most needs to establish contact if the child is to develop fully are the very parents least likely to appear on electoral lists, namely the poorest parents, both materially and culturally, and in particular migrant workers. Those who are most prepared to become involved in school affairs are not necessarily those whose presence is most beneficial. It is also found that the higher the social level of the families, the less the teachers seem to welcome the parents into the school and, for example, to want to work in front of them.

The degree of parental participation varies enormously. In Italy the 'organi collegiali' consider the parents' opinion on some aspects of the organization of teaching in schools, while in France the 'parents' committees' have no jurisdiction on teaching matters. In the Netherlands, where the principle of freedom in teaching is highly valued in every sector at every level, the initiative is left largely to the local communities and the various school organization authorities. Every five years the headmistress sends the inspector a 'programme of games and activities' for her own school. The programme is drawn up corporately and must cover every aspect of pre-school education. While Dutch teachers are quite willing to have parents help with secretarial work, maintenance of equipment or administration, they are generally little inclined to allow them to take part in actual teaching.

In general, the more competent the teacher and the greater his responsibility in the teaching organization, the less he is disposed to share educational responsibility within the school with parents, even though he may be prepared to have them join in activities to a considerable extent. When he does allow them to join in educational tasks, he still controls and guides the work.

The national style of education in pre-school establishments and in families is also of influence. In British nursery schools, parents are becoming increasingly involved in work with teachers and children. The United Kingdom has numerous play-groups, which are entirely the responsibility of the parents, although sometimes open to inspection by the Ministry of Health or educational authorities.

There seems to be less parental participation when pre-school education is attached to the primary school and has adopted all its ways, and when the older children take the younger ones to school, so that the teachers have less opportunity to see the parents.

Forms of informal contact vary widely in all the countries; the commonest are as follows:

(a) personal interviews,

(b) information meetings,

(c) visits to the nursery school in operation,

(d) children receiving the parents,

(e) parents helping with special occasions, walks, administrative duties, educational activities, children's meals, the library, etc.,

(f) teachers' visits to families,

(g) training sessions for parents: 'parents' school', improvement classes, (or reading classes in some areas).

In the next Chapter, we shall describe other forms of contact with families in projects for children from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Parents and educators are not the only adults who are directly concerned with the lives of young children. There are doctors, remedial psychologists, sociologists, social workers, dietitians, dentists, etc.; an increasingly varied and growing army of specialists revolves around young children.

As we have seen, nursery centres are an attempt to group together all the services represented by these specialists. It is proving very difficult to establish such centres owing to the variety of administrative bodies to whom they are responsible. Each body has different operating standards and the people they cover are too disparate in type of training and corporate privileges. Nursery centres are very often included in the plans of new towns and are designed according to standards imposed by different, highly centralized administrative bodies; they form a pre-determinated reception centre, which has difficulty in adjusting to actual requirements.

We have already shown the dangers of regarding nursery education as a set of social services, in which the child becomes only an object of work. Less narrowly specialized training would facilitate contact between all the specialists and the child could still be considered in his entirety.

This generous concept of the nursery centre therefore seems unlikely to become widespread unless action is taken to simplify administration and improve staff preparation.

Efforts are currently being made towards closer collaboration between the administrative bodies involved. In France reform (circular of 22 April 1976) of the special education committees allows a wider comparison of opinions and greater collaboration between the departments of the Ministry of Health and those of the Ministry of Education and parents. However, the price which has to be paid for this useful reform is an administrative system which is far more cumbersome than before and which is doubtless too uniform.

A child's life unfolds in a universe larger than one in which he has only rather privileged relations with a number of adults, who are especially interested in him or especially prepared to be concerned with him; education centred on the child should be open to every aspect of the child's environment.

The diversity of children's environments is superimposed on the variety of children's temperaments and gives rise to socio-cultural differences which make for widely varying populations of children. It is therefore impossible for standardized pre-school education to cover so many aspects of childhood.

There is a growing feeling that the nursery school needs to be open to the community as a whole. This enables teachers, who, in towns in particular, are not always part of the community, to get to know it and to establish relations of use to their educational work. It also enables people, who are not directly connected with the nursery school, to play a part in education, if appropriate. It is recognized that each member of the community may have an educational role to play, since education is not the exclusive domain of teachers and parents.

In Denmark, France, Italy and England, a number of community projects have been achieved and in some places efforts are made to make all sorts of adults or older children feel involved with the nursery school. This works well when a proper, self-motivating children's community, with its own personality, has been formed at the same time (community of relationships, of ideas, of feelings, of action, of projects) and provided the adults' activities take the children's own wishes into account and contribute something to them.

In practice, a number of abuses are being committed in the name of community ideas. For instance, some French towns claim use of the fine nursery school buildings for judo lessons and social evenings, in which the children play no part.

A good nursery school is not a bare, impersonal place. It is a living environment showing signs of continuous educational activity, which is enriched by all the things the children make. The children are entitled to find it just as they left it. For many young children it is the only place they have of their own and adults should respect it.

Since adults still have a long way to go in understanding their educational role in society and showing improvement in this area, the local nursery school can be the ideal place for them to educate themselves as non-professional educators and to reflect on all the problems of education. What better way could they find of achieving this than by getting to know this small society of children and learning to respect it?

Nowadays, when social demonstrations mostly take the form of demands by interest groups, there is too great a tendency to view the organization of community life as a set of services made available to a closed community.

Opening the nursery school to the community should produce a reciprocal opening of the community to the nursery school. However, this cannot amount simply to increasing the number of adult discussions on children and raising the number of adults taking part in nursery education. This might only have the effect of placing adults in a better position to impose on children objectives which are alien to them. It might also result in loss of the unity and intimacy which characterize the best pre-school establishments, changing them into fairgrounds with everyone coming and going for ease of handling the children.

Community education is largely the acquisition of an open mind and a child, who is naturally open, is all the more so, the more open people are towards him.

The ways in which a nursery can be open to the community, and the extent of this, will of course vary according to the type of community, but it is essential in any case that the children should be the centre of any projects. The small town of Ispica in Sicily has achieved something which we consider exemplary in this respect and we should like to give a brief description of it.

Two years ago 14% of adults in Ispica were still illiterate. Two nursery schools in very unpretentious districts are running an experimental educational programme for children from 3 to 6 years old and for parents, using a team of nursery school teachers and special teachers. If they wish, the parents can prepare to take examinations in primary studies or first-year secondary school examinations, but the education which they receive does not follow the usual school course. Wide subject areas are chosen for both children and adults jointly, and each group works on them at its own level. In this way the parents can converse with their children and enrich them in everything they learn. Since the area is largely rural, this year's subject, chosen by common consent, is plant life. The parents have made a collection, for their children, of items made of woods and wood specimens and have put them on display in the schoolroom set aside for the parents. The fathers can come in the evenings from 6 to 9 pm but they are welcome to arrive whenever they can. The mothers work only during the tourist season. They come in the afternoon from 2 to 5 pm. Twice weekly there are joint sessions, when a question is discussed with mothers and children. The children then leave for a different activity and the teacher discusses the question further with the mothers at quite a different level, simply and informally, chiefly answering any questions.

Apart from helping the teachers sometimes, the mothers join in visits which the children make to craftsmen and other professionals in the area. On some Sundays everyone - children, parents, teachers, town officials (who have helped greatly in achieving this project) - goes on an excursion with specific educational aims.

The parents write reports and publish a quarterly journal; they write accounts of events, conduct interviews and invite professional speakers, who provide them with information on matters of interest to them. They also pursue artistic activities and the town council gives them the use of a large room in the old palace, which now houses the town hall, so that they can display their work.

Since they are too poor to have colour television, they have bought one together and have put it in the school, where they come to watch it with their children.

In return for the various entertainments which their children put on for them, the parents decided on one occasion to make a play, which they in turn could act for their children. They wrote the play, staged it, rehearsed it and made a stage. The children helped to paint the scenery and three of them had small parts in the play. The story was about emigration, a painful subject in this country, and it ended happily with the emigrants returning to their homeland.

Apart from its extraordinary community spirit, the remarkable thing about Ispica is that every time the children and adults are together, no matter how many adults are there, the children's participation is supreme and whatever the group does revolves around the children's immediate or long-term education and is accomplished with great seriousness, simplicity, pride and joy. Everything is decided together and the teachers, who are most enthusiastic, admit that they have learnt a lot from the parents. They, for their part, help the parents to fulfil their educational role but, in relation to the children, everyone keeps to his own role and together they complement each other in harmony.

Whatever the socio-cultural level of the families, contact between teachers and parents is mutually enriching. Conflicts between children and adults are also toned down when the adults become eager educators. They notice that the children have a lot to give them, that they help them in their own emotional human development.

Chapter VII

THE NURSERY SCHOOL FOR ALL

If pre-school education is a child's right, everyone must be able to benefit from it. Four categories of children are less favoured in this respect, two because it is more difficult to arrange access to a pre-school establishment for them (handicapped children and children from sparsely populated areas) and the other two because in their case attending a standard pre-school establishment proves less beneficial than is desirable (children of migrant workers and from disadvantaged backgrounds).

Such children, who are generally backward at school, have so far been regarded chiefly as handicapped either physically or socially or mentally. By assessing their behaviour according to traditional school standards, efforts have been made to 'compensate' for the handicap and this attitude has contributed considerably towards the nursery school being regarded largely as a preparation for primary school. At present, there is a growing tendency to reject this negative attitude, especially in the case of 'socially handicapped' children, and to want to consider the difference between them and others more positively. This means adapting the school to the children instead of the school persisting in making them adopt its standards. In this way their families are not given an inferiority complex, which does not help the children's development and which socially might have repercussions contrary to those desired, as was found to be the case in respect of rural environments. Some families, convinced that country life is harmful to their children's mental development, are tempted to move away to the towns.

Care must therefore be taken (and this is rarely done) to ensure that measures to encourage people to want a nursery school and to send their children to it regularly are based chiefly on positive arguments and that the children do not begin their pre-school education with the unenviable drawback of alleged or assessed backwardness. The faith which parents, friends and teachers have in a child's abilities is the most powerful aid to his development.

For all these categories of children special teacher preparation too seldom found, is most urgently required, so that the teachers can:

(1) gain better knowledge of social environments;

(2) establish close, positive contacts with families;

(3) understand parents' problems, particularly in relation to their children;

(4) base their educational activities more on the children's strong points

rather than on what are considered their weaknesses relative to customary standards; sound teaching based on the children's real strengths is the best means of activating those areas of experience which were previously inadequately stimulated and of gradually succeeding in making them active;

(5) learn to speak the local dialect, if necessary;

(6) possess naturally all the necessary qualities and abilities (see Chapter VIII).

Additional teacher training is especially essential because the classes containing these children are very often taken by beginners, either because they are located in very poor parts of the town, where teachers are unwilling to go, or because they have just been set up in particularly remote, sparsely populated areas. In the latter case, the teachers' isolation makes this teaching support all the more necessary (see next Chapter).

Not only teaching standards, but also administrative standards are less favourable to all the above categories of children and should be made more flexible.

1. STANDARDS GOVERNING CLASS NUMBERS

In France, the standards for class numbers have had to be lowered in recent years to prevent the closure of village schools with single classes and to open rural nursery classes. Yet despite these measures, and despite groups being combined and half-size, part-time classes being formed, there are still some rural areas without pre-school education.

In Belgium, which is densely populated, pre-school education, which is available almost everywhere, is at risk this year, unless the standards governing class numbers are changed to prevent the closure of some rural nursery classes. For some parts of the northern Netherlands, which are being depopulated, the standard of 20 children per class is proving too high at present. In general, national standards must be lowered in schools which take a lot of foreign children and children from disadvantaged social backgrounds. The same applies to ordinary schools when they take handicapped children (who, in all the countries, are increasingly being educated together with normal children whenever possible, if only on a part-time basis).

In some cases extra teachers, specialists if necessary, would also be required on a full-time or part-time basis:

(1) specialists or therapists visiting children suffering from physical or mental handicaps (Denmark, France);

(2) specialists for work with the children of migrant workers (Netherlands);

(3) foreign teachers: in Bavaria bilingual kindergartens are run with the help of qualified teachers sent by their country of origin: the German teacher and the foreign teachers are with the whole of the class all day and use both languages. At times the foreign teacher takes the young migrant children to improve their native language. There will soon be 12 such institutions, which receive support from the 'Staatsinstitut für Frühpädagogik', which directs their work.

2. INSTALLATION STANDARDS

In France the mountainous departement of the Jura has accomplished the considerable task of opening 40 rural nursery classes during the past five years, because the authorities did not enforce the current standards for the construction of nursery schools and because all sorts of available buildings - old school playgrounds, vicarages, cheese dairy, entertainments hall, etc. - were fitted out as well as was possible.

The French Ministry of Education has also recently (1977) prepared more moderate standards for very small schools.

3. FINANCIAL STANDARDS

In most countries, the usual amount of subsidies granted by the State is not sufficient for the low budgets of small parishes, which are unable to build or fit out classes or children's canteens or to finance transport for the children or classroom equipment.

The salaries of teachers responsible for children in these categories should be higher than those of their colleagues, in order to encourage staff stability in these difficult classes and to attract the most experienced teachers.

The salaries of teachers from the countries of emigration are sometimes covered fully or partially by the countries of immigration. Special help is necessary for families with a child who presents a particular educational problem. In Denmark, mothers who themselves bring up a handicapped child receive a special allowance. In the United Kingdom and in France, their transport costs (where necessary) are reimbursed. In Scotland, the local authorities make full use of their powers, both in the field of education and that of social affairs, to help handicapped children to benefit from the educational opportunities available to them.

4. ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES

In highly centralized countries in particular, the authorities are too remote and their procedures too inflexible to adapt to individual problems, which are often difficult to solve. In order to stimulate local action, some decentralization is necessary and local authorities must act to coordinate the procedures of the various administrative departments (e.g. England).

5. OPERATING STANDARDS

In countries where pre-school establishments are run along school lines, the timetables followed in town schools are often inconvenient in rural areas.

The demands of farm work require later times and a continuous day without a long lunch-break.

The timetable for the school year should also take community requirements into consideration, especially the holiday periods of migrant workers.

In some Scottish nursery schools, where two alternating groups attend part time, only handicapped children attend for a full day, but only on certain days and accompanied by their mothers.

In disadvantaged areas in England, some nursery schools have begun to open during the holidays and, in France, holiday camps and open-air nursery centres have been run during the summer for some time now.

6. DIVERSIFICATION OF THE TEACHING STAFF'S ROLE

In order to be more effective with the categories of children under discussion, the teacher must not always be someone whe sees the children in class for a number of hours. Sometimes the teacher has to go to the children (children in hospital, peripatetic teachers for children in sparsely populated areas). The teacher must also visit the families, especially when they do not come to the nursery school (children picked up from school, foreign families in which the mothers have little to do with the community, etc.).

When a child gains little from attending a pre-school establishment, it is sometimes preferable to provide education at home in the presence of the mother, who can then be better involved in the educational process. In an English infant school, for instance, a 'liaison teacher' visits roughly 22 children from the most disadvantaged backgrounds for one hour each week, preparing them in this way for when they go to school. She leaves written recommendations with the mothers to help them to continue with the work. She has lunch at the school and, by being there, helps the children to feel at ease once they are at school.

In one region (Lothian) in Scotland a project is in progress to assess the work of 'teacher visitors' responsible for 12 homes with young children.

The advantage of this process is that it educates mother and child at the same time but it requires excellent qualities of warmth, tact and discretion on the part of the teacher. It is regrettable that it deprives the child of the community aspect of pre-school education. However, the two methods are sometimes combined.

The teacher can also be responsible for a group of children and support small secondary groups with advice and occasional visits (for instance, play-groups supervised by mothers in England).

In some disadvantaged parts of Dublin, the help given to mothers in organizing and running play-groups seems to be one of the best means of educating parents - for which the need is great - and rousing the interest of the women in the community.

Interviewing and meeting parents, inspiring cultural societies or demonstrations and participating in community life are apparently important tasks for the teacher.

If all children are entitled to pre-school education, 'positive discrimination' cannot be used to deprive some in favour of the most underprivileged, but it is possible to ensure that the teachers' available time is distributed according to the needs of each group.

Here is one example, that of a kindergarten in Mainz, Federal Republic of Germany, for healthy children and handicapped children, attached to a consultancy clinic for handicapped children. The clinic has a therapeutic swimming-pool, which all the nursery school children can use. The nursery school takes three groups of 20 children, with 5 handicapped children in each group. All the children attend from 8 am to noon. On Monday and Thursday afternoons, the teachers spend two hours working with handicapped children, whom they prepare for future admission to the kindergarten. On Wednesday afternoons, they work with those who already attend the kindergarten and who have special difficulties. Tuesday afternoons are reserved for team work discussions.

Besides better utilization of human resources, new aids may also be considered, such as television programmes aimed particularly at children in all the disadvantaged categories and at their parents and teachers.

Chapter VIII

STAFF TRAINING

At present there are two apparently opposite trends:

(a) one demanding more advanced training for teaching staff in pre-school establishments, at least equal to teacher training for primary schools, and

(b) one which would like pre-school education to be 'deprofessionalized'.

Those who are more school-orientated are making loud demands for a higher degree of professionalism in those countries where professionalism is not yet established; those who are oriented more towards family and community fear professionalism. Through it they see specialists assuming sole charge of education to the detriment of other members of the community, especially parents who, convinced of their own incompetence, end up by relinquishing their educational role.

Admittedly the number of specialists revolving round children is increasing steadily at present. Excessively narrow specialist training and school attendance at an ever younger age for an ever longer period risk leading inevitably to parental dispossession. Such dispossession is particularly disastrous when, in return, pre-school education only manages to reach the child superficially, through purely external professional handling and contact. If there is also too big a gap between the educational values of the nursery school and the community's socio-cultural character, the latter might deteriorate and the children become torn between two conflicting worlds.

In countries where the teachers' training is not very advanced, their behaviour towards the children is similar to that of highly solicitous parents. Since their lack of training makes a large number of teachers necessary, pre-school education might conceivably be better in every respect in the hands of parents organizing play-groups, with possibly some support from the authorities. The latter would provide greater incentive and would give more support in the most disadvantaged areas.

Yet when a child goes to a good nursery school, he mostly finds it wonderful, adores his teacher and attends eagerly. This attitude is often found very surprising, but it is explained by the fact that the child finds in the nursery school not only opportunities for play (he frequently has those at home too) and young friends (he may also have many where he lives) but also a world where children's thoughts and values can prevail, where his social tendencies can be asserted creatively, where everything that happens concerns him and affects him deeply. In it he finds a reflection of himself, multiplied and magnified, in which he can get to know himself, his worth, his power and his most intimate feelings. In some cases the teacher is alone with many (too many!) children, some of the buildings are decrepit and unsuitable ... yet the teaching is of a high standard.

To achieve this, the adult must know more than how to play with the child, keep him busy, supervise him or manage him. With great finesse he must be able to enter into the child's world, make it blossom, help the group to become organized in the present, project itself into the future, accept its experiences, share its emotions, hold productive conversations, feel that it is a small, thinking, active society asserting its own personality. Such intimate community life can only be achieved if there is continuity. Continuity is impossible in organizations in which the adults of a given community come in turn, as and when they are available, to take care of the group of children. In this case the community is admittedly involved but the small community of children - which also has the right to exist - cannot become established as such and remains more dependent on the adult community. Intimacy and continuity are two qualities of pre-school education which must be preserved; they do not lead to a break with social surroundings when the child is accepted just as he is and for what he is. Continuity is already sufficiently jeopardized by increasingly longer and more frequent holidays for teachers and, in some countries, by part-time work and a free choice of teaching posts.

The fact that some children are difficult at home but marvellous at school and that in general learning is easier at the nursery school than at home is not due solely to the teachers' skill, since teachers generally prefer not to have their own children in their class. In reality, a new form of adult-child relationship is involved, a liberating and encouraging relationship.

For all the above reasons, we feel that highly skilled, fully available professionals should be employed in pre-school education.

The dangers of unrealistic education unsuited to real conditions should be avoided by fuller, wider teacher training than that given so far in all countries. We feel that it ought to follow our main lines:

1. HEALTH AND PHYSIOLOGY OF THE YOUNG CHILD

This subject has been greatly neglected in countries in which pre-school education is, by long tradition, integrated with school. In France, only nursery school inspectors were required to have any real knowledge of the subject. Recent reform of the inspectorate reduced this requirement considerably. Yet it is important because the smaller the child, the more frail he is. Teachers make any teaching mistakes because they have no elementary health knowledge. At present stress is being laid on the importance of the body. A teacher of young children, more than any other, must therefore have satisfactory knowledge of how the body works and develops.

Where nursery schools and nursery staff training are controlled by the Ministry of Health (see Table 1), this subject is not neglected but it does happen that, for want of a more rounded training, concern with health problems becomes an end in itself, changing the children into objects of care instead of regarding them as subjects with their own aims and simply ensuring that their aims are achieved in healthy conditions.

2. PSYCHOLOGY OF THE YOUNG CHILD

Many teachers complain of inadequate knowledge of this subject and, in France, it is a subject in great demand on continuous training courses. In many countries, however, it is regrettable that lecturers in teachers' training colleges have mostly only book knowledge of child psychology. In practical teaching, excessively theoretical, formal knowledge is likely to produce narrow views rather than to sharpen the sense of observation. Psychology courses for teachers should make them more open-minded, more full of wonder and of the spirit of inquiry as they set out to conquer the world of children; instead they aim too frequently at giving them only more power so that they are better able to surround the child with the preconceived ideas of adults. Psychology lecturers in teachers' training colleges should have personal experience and be gifted with a great understanding of children (like lecturers in educational psychology and educational philosophy in England).

3. SOCIOLOGY OF EDUCATION

Since a child's education mostly takes place in the social environment in which he lives, the teacher must be able to adapt his activities to various actual social conditions. He must acquire some knowledge of social anthropology, but above all he must develop the ability to establish positive, productive relations with different social environments, in varied educational activities. With the children he must be familiar with the attitudes and behaviour which are most likely to improve the social development of the groups of children.

Where pre-school education is or has been under the control of the Ministry of Social Affairs, this aspect of training is less neglected. In the Federal Republic of Germany and in Denmark training is provided for a category of teachers called 'social teachers'.

4. NURSERY SCHOOL TEACHING

This is of course the most important aspect of training. The role of the above three subject areas is only to elucidate and guide teaching ideas and practice in order to make teaching more adequate.

Nursery school teaching has been developed chiefly in countries in which pre-school education has come under the Ministry of Education for some considerable time. However, for want of paying adequate attention to the other aspects of training, it frequently tends to attach exaggerated importance to the processes and techniques of instruction, to the detriment of the more basic needs of young children.

Teacher training must be based on a sufficiently high level of general knowledge, equal at least to a full course of secondary study; this criterion is not met everywhere (see Table 9). It must also be based on a variety of skills of a suitable standard, such as physical education, dancing, singing, music, dramatic art, graphic and plastic arts, handicrafts. When secondary education fails to teach aesthetic subjects adequately, it is difficult for training colleges to fill the gaps. In some countries there are people working in nursery schools who have no musical training, for example, and who cannot even sing.

Here, more than at any other level of education, the psychological qualities of the teacher are of capital importance. He must not only be well-balanced, cheerful, happy, invigorating and sensitive, he must also have great powers of expression so that he can take the slightest shade of thought and feeling and put it into an attractive outward form, which the children can perceive. He must be capable of being interested in the child's world other than theoretically and professionally; he must be able to enter into the children's play, share its joys, savour its poetry, wonder at the inherent 'genius' of childhood.

Teacher training in the four subject areas listed above must therefore be pursued at different levels, i.e.:

(1) theoretical knowledge,

(2) the mastery of techniques,

(3) the mastery of forms of expression,

(4) the dynamics of adult-child relationships.

Provided primary and secondary education develop sufficiently all the talents of its pupils, and provided the profession of infant teacher is sufficiently well rewarded to attract able students, full training such as that which we suggest should not be too difficult to achieve. At present the narrowness or excessively low level of training is leading to praise for work in multi-discipline teams, but team work is difficult when those who are cooperating have received quite different training. Each team member considers only one aspect of the child, but the child is not a combination of several pieces, like a puzzle. In reality, other child specialists also require a wider training which does not disregard the educational needs of young children.

In the nursery school it is nevetheless the teacher who plays the most important and most central part, and whatever the limits and inadequacies of his present training, it is he who is best prepared to deal with children. The Rutland Street project, in one of the poorest parts of Dublin, began with equal numbers of teachers and social assistants. After one year, the social assistants had to be replaced by more teachers.

A proliferation of specialists in the nursery school might result in teachers being dispensed with in the same unfortunate way as parents. It is therefore important that teachers be given a sufficiently wide training so that they feel competent in every area, with specialists being used only as advisers and for help with particular or specially difficult cases.

This does not mean that education is the sole prerogative of teachers nor that team work is rejected. It does mean that teachers should retain full responsibility for education within the pre-school establishment even when other people (whether specialists or not) play a part, either at their request or otherwise. This responsibility goes hand in hand with the continuity and intimacy with the children mentioned above.

Teacher training should also include special preparation for work with the categories of children discussed in the previous section. Since the trend is to have handicapped children educated in ordinary classes as far as possible, every teacher is now likely to take some children suffering from various handicaps during the course of his career. Besides the special projects set up for children from disadvantaged backgrounds and for the children of migrant workers in densely populated areas, teachers must be made aware of the problems of such children and they must be given the means of providing them with a better education. Since September 1976, the French centres for training teachers to educate migrant children have begun to take action at nursery-school level. Owing to the major advance of urban environments in our modern civilization, it is also necessary to develop teaching materials more suitable for young country children (work of the 'Deutsches Jugendinstitut', and of the 'Staatsinstitut für Frühpädagogik' in Munich).

We have indicated training guidelines strictly for the nursery school. However, if the child's development and his gradual overall growth are to be better understood and if better contact is to be established with families and with the primary school, it is essential that the nursery teacher's training should also cover child education before and after the nursery school.

In so far as efforts are being made to make nursery school and primary school teacher training equivalent (see Table 9) and to achieve better integration of the nursery school into the educational system, the question arises as to whether teachers from the two levels should be given separate or partially combined training. At present the following situations apply:

(1) separate training institutes, different training level, separate training: Denmark, Federal Republic of Germany, Netherlands (moving towards third category);

(2) separate training institutes, same level of training, but separate training: Belgium, Italy;

(3) joint institutes, same level, partially combined training, specialization: Luxembourg, United Kingdom, Belgium in the State sector;

(4) joint institutes, same level, combined training: France and Ireland (for the sector integrated into education).

The advantages of partially combined training, recommended by the Council of Europe, are recognized by all. The question is whether specialization is also desirable for each level or for shorter cycles which are found for example in England (nursery-infant, 3 to 7, or infant-junior 5 to 11)?

The more a high level of competence is required, the more difficult it is to be competent at every level. When there is no specialization, it is found that student teachers are trained chiefly for the primary level. Lack of specialization thus leads to one specialization being more predominant than the other, to the detriment of the nursery school. We have also already noted a tendency to specialize by teaching disciplines. In view of the growing volume of requirements of increasingly advanced training, if specialization by level is not chosen, specialization by subject will probably be necessary in the end. For children to receive a rounded education, it is advisable for the teacher to have a background of general subjects for his level of teaching. On the other hand, teaching advisers, who themselves have general experience, can be specialists in a given subject (e.g. musical education or physical education advisers in France).

When work in a nursery school is less well paid than work in a primary school, all the students might choose to specialize in primary teaching. This is mostly the case in Luxembourg now that the level of training is the same. Consequently, the first students accepted for the Teachers' Training College are able to study their chosen special subject and the other have no option but to train for nursery school. Although the recruitment level has been raised, if this situation persists, nursery schools might end up in future with a growing number of less motivated teachers. Fearing that another result might be constant changes of nursery school staff, since the non-motivated teachers ask to be transferred to primary teaching as soon as possible, the Ministry has made it compulsory for the teacher to work for ten years in the level for which she was trained; in addition, if she changes over, she must study the second special subject.

These barriers are often against the teaching staff's wishes. For instance, some feel that, towards the end of their career, a primary class would be less tiring than a nursery class for some teachers. In general the trade unions and some parents' associations would be more inclined towards training with a common core (primary teaching) and special subjects, one of which would be the nursery school. With this in mind, specialization need not involve the division of education into parts, since each special subject can be used largely to provide mutual help in team work.

The fact of being able to choose between specializing in mathematics or in the nursery school makes the latter look like one of the special subjects for primary training. In England, special choices are also made, but they are made within each level of specialization (and only for the purpose of more detailed study, since the teachers remain generalists). It is advisable not to specialize too soon, however, so that a period spent observing the different levels can provide a basis for informed choice. In Denmark, young people are permitted to spend a fairly long period in schools before even deciding on the teaching profession.

In Scotland, in order to teach in a nursery class (children aged from 2 1/2 years to 4 years), a special qualification is required, which is acquired either by an extra year's study after the three years' training required for primary teaching or in three different ways for experienced teachers. The extra qualification does not carry a higher salary. It therefore attracts only particularly studious, well motivated students and gives prestige to the teachers of pre-school classes who, during their careers, can then easily aspire to the position of head of a major nursery school or elementary school.

Although widely separate training is in no way desirable, fully merged training will always be prejudicial to the nursery school, which has less compelling and less immediate scholastic requirements and in which the teaching is more subtle, less palpable and, finally, more difficult.

By reason of this difficulty, the staff of nursery schools more than any other needs to be not only supported in its activities but also encouraged in its research. Yet in some countries the only stimulation which it receives comes from students who are being trained. At present, training during employment either:

- is organized outside school hours, during the holidays, and sometimes has to be paid for (e.g. in Belgium in the subsidized sector);
- is organized during school hours but the teachers are not replaced; when there is only one adult per class, this presents difficulties (Belgium); when the teaching staff is fairly numerous, it presents no great problems (Federal Republic of Germany;
- the teachers are replaced in their classes, (e.g. France).

The disadvantage of the last solution is that it breaks continuity of teaching but it does mean that long, full-time courses can be organized (up to three months in France). Student teachers from the Teachers' Training College, who are near the end of their training, are in fact used to replace teachers during long-term courses held at the Training College.

Prolonging the school year for teachers (see Table 10) in countries in which it is obviously too short, and increasing the number of teachers in nursery schools in countries in which they are too few (see Table 7) would allow intensive courses to be held outside school hours and other courses to be held during class hours. Teachers' school hours should be reviewed overall to make them more compact, more diversified, and to allow for the inclusion of independent training periods when, exempted from all their usual duties for a specific period, the teachers could pursue a personal project to enrich their experience, occasionally, even, outside the training institutes or universities.

So far there have been very few men in nursery schools (see Table 8), but they are now being admitted in increasing numbers to training for pre-school education. However, the number interested is low and those who come to the nursery school often stay only for a short time if they can transfer without difficulty from the nursery level to the primary level. If they decide to stay, they become heads, educational advisers or inspectors in the briefest time possible.

In some EC Member States, unemployment among intellectuals leads university graduates to become interested in the nursery school and to want to teach there. This trend follows the same lines as trade union demands for university-standard training for teachers in nursery schools and primary schools.

From the European point of view, meetings and exchanges of teachers, visits to schools in EEC Member States - still very few at the pre-school level - should constitute training opportunities made available more often to nursery school teachers. It should be mentioned, however, that, under the cultural agreement between France and Luxembourg, infant class teachers from Luxembourg have spent periods in French classes.

Chapter IX

TEACHING AND RESEARCH

For some ten years the EEC Member States have been working on projects to revise pre-school education to varying extents; new programmes or guidelines have been published in Italy, Ireland, Belgium, the Federal Republic of Germany and, quite recently, France.

The general aims and objectives follow roughly the same lines but many questions remain concerning their implementation. Should the programmes follow a particular structure or not? Should they be explicit or not? How should they be kept up to date? Should they be based only on psychological development theory? If education has to take socio-cultural differences into account, can there be a general programme or should all members of the Community, including children, play a part in its preparation?

Some countries prefer not to issue national guidelines on pre-school education (United Kingdom, Luxembourg, Netherlands). In several German Länder, researchers, educators, parents and other participants have all worked together to draw up programmes, some of which are now being tried experimentally for a period of three years in more than two hundred kindergartens in nine Länder.

While advances in teaching have always been the outcome of frequently empirical research, current research in teaching is characterized by a growing tendency towards 'action-research' carried out within schools. However, it is essential that the researchers' collaboration should not stifle the teachers' creativity; on the contrary, it should stimulate it. When teachers are closely associated with research, the researchers find that they have a lot to learn from them and that their effect on the results is a positive one. Excellent teams have already been formed in all the countries and the teachers are acquiring a consciously deeper knowledge of teaching practice.

So far research within schools has been dominated to a very large extent by concern for scholastic success and has been expanded chiefly on the subject of the acquisition of cognitive skills. The fact, now recognized, that parental influence is stronger than that of the nursery school, has led to a number of family-oriented projects.

In the case of the young child, extremely subtle things have tremendous importance. A study should therefore be made of the subtle aspects of adult behaviour in relation to children's behaviour, and of all the delicately complex dynamics of relationships.

Young children can doubtless give evidence of their immense, unexploited talents other than by being precocious. Instead of trying to squeeze a certain degree of development into a given period, it would be better to expand the present by diversifying children's experience and to embark on research into the range of abilities of children of this age.

We should also remember that many children of pre-school age live in bi-cultural and bilingual environments. Some children of migrant workers are occasionally faced with up to four languages when they are still very young. This is the case in Luxembourg, for instance. Early bilingualism has already been studied extensively, but the subject should also be studied from our European perspective, in the context of multi-national, multi-cultural education. While it is recognized that young children show great aptitude for languages, the fact remains that a young child only uses a language if he wants to do so. Consequently the emotional climate in which a language is experienced is of capital importance. It has to be admitted, however, that at present few adults are bilingual and, above all, few are open-minded culturally. Linguistic co-existence often gives rise to competitiveness and power struggles which can sometimes reach the very heart of a country, to the point of becoming a veritable linguistic war.

It is in this atmosphere of closed-mindedness, of lack of interest and rivalry that children have to learn languages. Even when parents want their children to learn another language, it is mostly for utilitarian purposes or from a desire for power rather than with a view to broadening the mind.

The consequences of such a negative atmosphere should be studied, and efforts made to create more suitable conditions for learning languages. Since many very young children are now in such situations anyway, it is advisable to stop thinking that their fate is unenviable and to assume a more constructive attitude by determining the conditions under which this situation might have a positive effect on them.

Passing beyond the consideration of languages alone, we might then try to determine the conditions required for the development of open personalities, where national cultures have produced chiefly closed personalities.

A European-scale project such as this ought to guide research along these lines if one day Europe is to become a proper multi-cultural community for its inhabitants. A young child is naturally receptive to every culture. It is the adult who gradually makes him unreceptive. Positive contact with another culture from a very early age can help to make a child open-minded.

The experimental exchanges of kindergarten teachers and nursery school teachers between France and the Federal Republic of Germany should be viewed in this broad context. Some consider them Utopian or a premature luxury. Those who judge them from the strictly scholastic viewpoint of language learning are careful to note any faults and the difficulties of continuity at every level of education. It is nevertheless an experiment leading towards less culturally closed education, and it has enabled a small frontier town such as Bad-Bergzabern to teach French to every child from the nursery school up to the secondary school. In order to improve the experiments, more experienced teachers who are better prepared to face the special teaching difficulties inherent in such situations should take part in the exchanges. Useful lessons, which can be passed on, could also be drawn from the exchange visits by carrying out 'action-research'.

Generally speaking, if education is to advance to this level, it is important for teaching research to be freed from the excessively strong hold of concern for subsequent scholastic achievements, which leads to the nursery school being considered only as a place of early learning. The nursery school must also be studied from the dynamogenic aspect of a living place, a place for social intercourse, a place of gifts, love, joy, effusion, intimacy, discovery and recognition of others, of happiness and open-mindedness.

Chapter X

NURSERY SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION

The administration of pre-school education varies according to the degree of independence allowed. At present many of the officials in charge of finance consider independence to be a costly solution. It involves the construction of separate buildings, for which the standards are often more exacting than those for primary schools, and the need to pay management staff for frequently very small schools. It is not teaching considerations indicating a need for better contact, but considerations of a pecuniary nature which often make some States - in which the inadequate development of pre-school education would require a particularly substantial effort - opt for the development of infant classes attached to primary schools. This is true for some German Länder where a fall in the birth-rate has also made school buildings available.

At national level, separation of these two levels of instruction complicates considerably the administrative control and educational inspection of a sprinkling of small schools, which are divided into unequal divisions and are often too widespread geographically for special nursery school inspectors. This situation also results in the overlap of divisions with different specialities, with the risk of superfluous administration. This seems completely inadvisable when the situation is already highly complicated, owing to some local authorities being allowed a certain amount of freedom to encourage and organize schools. In the Netherlands, for instance, the establishment of mixed primary-nursery divisions in January 1978 gave one nursery school inspector in Zealand one hundred schools less with the same number of teachers (600) but, although his new division covers only eight parishes, there are nevertheless 33 different administrative bodies for the 160 schools which he now has to inspect.

For purposes of simplification, administrative efficiency and economy, other countries are now also moving towards greater integration of the nursery school and towards reorganization of divisions. In France, mixed divisions are now being gradually established, following reform of the method of recruiting and training departmental inspectors. All the inspectors are trained for primary education and they can also choose to specialize in one of the various subjects, nursery school teaching being offered as part of one of the options available. The intention is to establish in the departments teams of inspectors covering all the special subjects. The man or woman specializing in nursery school inspection would have to provide encouragement for all nursery classes, if he or she were unable to inspect them all. In Luxembourg, where inspectors, for practical and educational reasons, have always preferred not to specialize, but where nursery schools were assigned to them by choice, a stricter distribution of divisions is being prepared to prevent overlap and to ensure that local authorities have to deal with only one inspector.

Corporate interests often lead to the same trend, either because nursery schools thereby gain equality of status, which they did not have (Netherlands, Luxembourg), or because mixing presents possibilities of promotion (for instance, more important positions as heads, which are not always supported by the trade unions). In several countries, primary education cut back from above (or threatened with this) by the reform of secondary education, is seeking to extend downwards, since only the nursery sector is still open to major extension. In countries where male staff was previously restricted to primary education, mixed divisions offer men teachers, who are usually more eager for promotion than women, the prospect of assuming responsibilities in the nursery sector. However, it should be noted that nursery school teaching is of little interest to men, as witnessed by their numbers in those countries in which they are accepted for nursery schools (especially when pre-school education is not simply an extension of primary education and takes very young children). On the other hand, they are found more readily in positions of responsibility (headmasters, inspectors, advisers), in the research sector or acting as representatives in professional associations or at various assemblies.

In those countries where positions of responsibility in the nursery sector were previously reserved for women, it is to be expected that the above reforms will reinforce the general trend towards a preponderance of women in the lower ranks of the profession and, proportionately, a preponderance of men in the highest ranks.

Some countries, such as the UK, attach great importance to the head, who sets the whole tone of the school. In Luxembourg, on the other hand, there is no such function but inspectors, who have very small divisions, attend the schools frequently. In Scotland, nursery school headmistresses, who have to have a special qualification for the post, are also responsible for individual remedial teaching and for back-up (a useful solution in many respects).

When one school covers several levels of education, it is difficult to find a headmaster with the full range of abilities. A level which is not within his scope then risks either being neglected or having its legitimate requirements badly understood. It is always very likely that this will apply to the nursery level, firstly because it is considered less important and secondly because there is more chance that headmasters will come from primary education. For this reason it is planned in the Netherlands to appoint an assistant headmaster for the level which is outside the headmaster's scope.

The same risk applies in the case of inspectors when they are not competent in both arees. Here again it is the nursery school which is likely to suffer. A situation similar to that which arose in Luxembourg for admission to the Teachers' Training College is beginning to arise in France with regard to inspection. It is quite unusual for inspector candidates to choose the nursery option and the appointments made each year are generally insufficient for the needs of the nursery school. This state of affairs is beginning to cause the authorities concern, especially since, in France, the lack of specialization by teachers in Training Colleges had hitherto been offset by the specialization of inspectors. The system of options is also only effective when the inspectors within a department cooperate. Yet such cooperation, which is greatly desired by the Ministry, is quite contrary to deeply rooted habits, since each inspector likes to be absolute master within his geographical sector. Since many inspectors also feel that they are more highly valued for their administrative and representative duties than for their educational duties, and since they tend (sometimes by force) to sacrifice the latter, there is reason to fear that nursery school administration, with the special aspects which it can have, added to that of primary schools, might intensify the inspector's administrative role to the detriment of his educational duties. The latter have also become too vast for him to have the necessary time - if not the qualifications - to cover them all.

In Belgium, on the other hand, the tendency has been more to reduce the inspector's administrative duties and increase his educational role. In the State sector, which is still not greatly developed at the pre-school level,a body of nursery school inspectors was set up two years ago with special responsibility for the implementation of teaching reform. Special inspectors have been working in the local authority sector and the private sector for some considerable time. The existence of various bodies of inspectors, some of whom are appointed by the organizing authorities, means that teachers in Belgium are used to visits from several inspectors, and cooperation between inspectors seems effective. In England, inspectors with various special subject areas cooperate under the care of one of their number, who coordinates their work.

In general, when the inspectors' duties are simply to check that ministerial standards are being observed (as in the Netherlands or Belgium) or to give teaching advice (as in Belgium), their job does not assume the potentate aspect, which is so little in keeping with the aims of modern education.

The aim of modern education is to form independent personalities. We have shown that, to achieve this, it is desirable for each level of education itself to be independent within a well structured, overall organization. In reality, the levels can only be satisfactorily linked together if they are mutually independent since, when co-existing creatures or entities are not independent of each other, the relations between them can only result from force or subordination. This is why care must be taken to avoid solutions which seem simple and advantageous but which might not lead to true progress.

In Italy teachers are pressing their demands for the organization of nursery schools, for which provision was made by the law of 18 March 1968, but which has always been delayed by financial difficulties. Besides efforts to obtain more suitable premises and more plentiful equipment, they are asking that each nursery school should be headed by an experienced, competent staff capable of directing and backing up the team's work both within the nursery school and in relations with the community and the primary school. They are also asking for a body of special inspectors who understand the needs of the nursery school.

If pre-school education in every country is to have competent staff responsible for training, organization, administration and motivation, then these jobs must be made accessible to people who are well motivated for such work; this is not the case when staff are recruited on the basis of purely academic criteria, without adequate experience being required.

Other considerations, which have major financial implications, concern the number of staff required in relation to the number of children and the hours worked (see Table 7 and Table 10). In some countries a distinction has been drawn between the hours worked when the children are present and the hours of work for which the teachers are paid. When this distinction is not made, educational duties, which are not strictly concerned with teaching, and training during employment present organizational problems.

Complaints of staff shortages are sometimes strongest from schools with large staffs. This is explained by the fact that teachers in schools with a small staff may not notice that some children need special attention, because they are working only on joint activities. Inversely, in schools with a large staff, the teachers may be so immersed in individual problems that they fail to see that organizing things differently would make the children more independent and the presence of adults more discreet, less onerous and less of a nuisance to the children.

Since the purpose of the nursery school is not to reproduce a family atmosphere but to provide a different social experience, too few children is little better than too many. However, it is not really possible to fix a reasonable number which would be ideal, since the ideal number depends on:

(a) size and design of the premises;

(b) children's age;

(c) type of children (see Chapter VII);

(d) services provided;

(e) period for which the services are supplied;

(f) adults' qualifications;

(g) type of teaching.

The teachers' qualifications are a major factor in this respect. For instance, in France, where classes have been far too big and are only now beginning to improve, a major creative achievement has been accomplished in this field for many decades because teachers of the same standard as that required for the primary school have been used. By recruiting under-qualified people, some countries have had to employ them in large numbers. This does not make preschool education better or less expensive, and ultimately it impedes opportunities to expand. In other countries fairly large groups are formed, but the qualified teacher is backed up by a less well qualified assistant or by a trainee.

Financial considerations are far from negligible, and the nursery school is generally considered very expensive. Yet it is questionable whether the share of the budget allocated to it (see Table 12) is in keeping with the importance of infancy to an individual's development.

Chapter XI

FUTURE PROSPECTS

A number of studies and measures are necessary if education for very young children is to be organized to provide a maximum guarantee of their rights.

I - STUDIES REQUIRED

In recent years, education for young children has been the subject of numerous studies. The studies should be continued and should relate more specifically to the EC if the Member States wish to progress towards joint measures in this field.

(1) By studying the life of young children in our society, we should be able to assess their own needs and ensure that pre-school establishments (and in particular the hours they keep each year and each day) are not organized simply in accordance with the primary school or the parents' professional life. Attempts should be made to reconcile the pace of life of each party involved, avoiding any further confusion between the needs of a young child and those of the family, or school objectives and customs. This study should lead to a better social and family policy and to a better educational policy.

(2) By defining the characteristics peculiar to each age, it will be possible to provide the full variety of education required by the differences between age groups (so great between birth and 8 years) and to achieve a continuity of education which is not likely to diminish the children's resources or to be harmful. In reality, the only sound continuity is that based on the child himself or, in other words, on the permanence of his identity through the phases of his development. Merging existing schools and intermixing frequently inadequate teaching methods may well lead only to continuity at the formal structural level without guaranteeing the only educational continuity which is desirable, namely the constant search for a suitable solution to the needs peculiar to each age and to each particular group of children.

The characteristics peculiar to each age also vary with environment. As before, it is the permanence of the child's being throughout his various social roles which must form the basis of continuity between family and school.

When educational continuity is not based on awareness of the child, of his constantly changing development and the diversity of his social roles, there is the risk of complicity between the institutions (family, pre-school establishment, primary school) to force children into ways which are not theirs. Educational cooperation in such cases amounts to nothing more than discussions about the children in which the children play no part, and to the institutions manipulating them in connivance with each other; the children either resist such treatment or become resigned to it.

(3) With regard to a rounded education, which considers the whole of young children's requirements (and not only their 'scholastic' needs), we must decide if it is advisable to have the beginning of the 'primary school' as it is at present coincide with the beginning of compulsory school attendance and the latter with the initial learning of basic intellectual skills. The possibility that the age of compulsory school attendance might be lowered in several EC Member States makes the need to adapt schools to children's real requirements all the more pressing. In view of young children's special needs for protection and their psychical characteristics, the question is whether education for young children should be restricted to children from birth to 4 years or 5 years or whether it should cover all children up to 7 or 8 years.

(4) The studies should state the rights of the young child more specifically and define the moral status of the pre-school establishment as a guarantee of those rights. We should then consider to what extent and how the pre-school establishment should be made independent so that it can most easily find its own original form in relation to education within the family and to the primary school, while retaining continuity with them.

(5) Again bearing in mind all the requirements of young children, a study should be made of how cooperation between the various specialists (doctors, psychologists, social workers, etc.) can be established, within the different national contexts, while preserving the continuous, intimate nature of the children's relations with their teachers, who must be recognized as fully competent and responsible in relation to the children.

(6) In each country a study should be made of measures to decentralize administration and to relax or modify the standards in force, which would lead to the installation of schools more in keeping with community requirements and the requirements of different children (migrant children, country children, etc.) and to more rational utilization of material and human resources.

II - ACTION-RESEARCH

In the case of a number of problems which are difficult to solve at national level, projects undertaken as an extension of research being carried out within the EC could prove more fruitful.

In general, in every country in the world, education has been organized from the strictly national point of view and it is not adjusted to coping with the problem of educating the children of migrant workers, which often takes the form of a struggle between cultural influences. Attempts at bi-cultural education prove inadequate when faced with extreme pluralism and their generalization seems quite Utopian, both to the countries of origin and to the host countries.

Perhaps a different type of education should be sought. In Chapter IX we pointed out that a young child is naturally open to all cultures since he can acquire any one of them. Yet most adults have closed minds culturally and some are fanatically patriotic. The result of education is therefore mostly imprisonment in a particular culture. A type of education which goes beyond the opposing concepts of taking root and pulling up roots, of traditionalism and modernism, must therefore be sought. Taking root in a culture, preserving its traditions, must become not a process which closes the mind but a springboard from which to move on towards the whole of mankind.

Populations becoming mixed together, faster means of transport, mass communications, mean that a person speaking only one language will not know how to communicate with people from a different culture and will therefore be the handicapped person of the future. The small migrant child should therefore no longer be considered a special case. In reality it is he who represents the new standard, he is the pioneer of a future society, since from now on every child will have to learn to move easily in a multi-cultural world.

An education based on cultural open-mindedness would no longer be prejudicial to migrants and it would be to the benefit of all children. The difficulty is that at present most teachers speak only one language, they are too shut up in their own culture and are sometimes engaged in nationalist conflicts.

Quite apart from any migration, Europe is and wants to be a multi-cultural community. For this reason we feel that education which is more open-minded is best encouraged at a European level. To achieve this, we feel that the following questions should be studied:

(1) What are the psychical characteristics of open-mindedness? What are the attitudes and behaviour of adults who produce closed-mindedness or open-mindedness in a child?

To what extent are they aware or unaware of their behaviour? What are the characteristics of 'open-minded' teaching compared with 'closed-minded' teaching? How can teachers be trained towards more open-minded teaching?

(2) What are the characteristics peculiar to teaching intended for very young children? This is often so subtle, so difficult to define and explain that some refer to it as 'invisible' teaching (Bernstein). It could be described as 'implicit' or 'immanent' in the sense that its most powerful methods can scarcely be expressed in concrete form and are difficult for the inexpert eye to perceive. For the teacher they often consist in her expressing herself in delicately different ways in order to establish a deep, productive relation with the children both as individuals and as groups. This subtle aspect of teaching makes the training of nursery teachers particularly difficult. Since impressions received during this period of life are particularly deep and long-lasting, a more conscious mastery of the methods used is necessary if the risk of giving the children closed minds is to be avoided.

(3) What is the type of efficiency peculiar to nursery school teaching? Nursery teaching easily escapes analysis not only with regard to its methods

but also with regard to its results. It is difficult to assess its effectiveness by the usual methods. Since its effects are often of a largely qualitative nature, it would have to be judged chiefly in terms of completeness, richness, vital expansiveness, power or shades of expression, etc.

In reality, a very marked effectiveness is noted once the two most widespread forms of teaching are left behind:

(a) busying the children with games and activities, occasional moments of verbal expression;
(b) closely guided exercises for specific learning purposes.

These methods of teaching leave the child confronting himself and his teacher's will alone. Teaching which makes positive use of having a group of children available, with all it contributes, is far more productive. Such teaching helps the group to form, motivates it, allows each child to learn in an encouraging, stimulating atmosphere of social interactions which bring growing self-awareness and its liberating effect.

We may also wonder whether methods considered most effective in some respects also make for open-mindedness.

(4) The early learning process can only be effective if teaching is based on the children's real abilities, which need to be better understood if a large part of children's capacity is not to remain undeveloped. Young children are known to have consirable ability for languages in particular. However, young children cannot regard languages as external subjects of study. For them, languages must serve a purpose and children only use them if they have cause to do so in order to establish relations with loved ones in their immediate circle.

Since many children are now in multi-lingual situations, a study should be made of how languages can be taught to advantage in the particular context of the nursery school (both to improve the native tongue and to learn a foreign language) and of the conditions required for language teaching to be successful.

All the above studies should cover in particular the children of migrant workers and those in other disadvantaged categories.

The establishment of pilot projects granted exceptional resources, which it is difficult to make generally available, is not recommended for the purpose of the studies. Study of the real situation, as may be found everywhere, is preferred. Including teachers in the research teams would make the studies closely involved with teaching practice and the teams could be chosen from multi-cultural and specially disadvantaged backgrounds.

The results of the studies could be circulated by a European Training Centre for the education of very young children, which would provide a very high standard of training to act as a sort of 'leading light' or ideal to be reached. It could have its headquarters in Brussels and operate in the different countries with no fixed national base.

One of the Centre's associated activities could be the compilation of children's traditions and children's folklore. The spread of a European repertoire of games, counting rhymes and songs would bring children a less artificial, stereotyped knowledge of children of the world than that provided through children's literature.

In the century of television, the exchange of video-cassettes, which will be on the increase, should enable young children to have personal, live contact at their own level of expression, with children from other EC Member States.

The European Centre could prepare audio-visual material (films, slides, video-cassettes, etc.) aiming to give children, at their own level, a wide, first class knowledge of the child's world in Eruope (and throughout the world) with all its problems, joys, games and products. Special films could be made for handicapped children, children living in sparsely populated areas and for the parents of all the categories of less privileged children.

Since the child is being considered in relation to his gradual development and to his environment, the studies and research must of course include contact with the surrounding community and with the primary school. However, from the point of view put forward here, if children are at the centre of educational action and assume responsibilities in their education, then contact should be established as far as possible on the basis of the children's awareness of their situation and of their development (even though they cannot yet put it into words). In addition, the different forms of contact should not be organized behind the children's backs and the children should play an essential, independent part in them.

This work should produce forms of contact, with family and school, which are highly educational for adults too, in that they reveal new facets of childhood. When the child is no longer treated simply as an object of care and education but as a conscious subject, he assumes a quite different dimension. For an adult, learning to liberate the child in a child is to learn to liberate the man in himself. In this dialectic of each other's consciousness, it is found that as the children progress so also do the adults and the parents, far from feeling deprived of their task as educators, find a new dignity in the process.

The procedures for establishing contact may vary according to background and circumstances. They may also lead to occasionally unexpected results, bearing the mark of the originality of children's psychism. The European Centre could issue reports describing the most successful of the various procedures found, thus bringing together the total experience gained in this field within the EC.

In order to give young children the place which is their due in a society which is not very welcoming, adults, who are so eager to fulfil their own potential, must discover that educating young children can be fascinating, fulfilling work and that the fulfilment of one group provides the right conditions for fulfilment of the other.

Table 1

Ministries in charge

Federal Republic of Germany	0 - 6	Ministry of Social Affairs (seven Länder) or Ministry of Culture (two Länder)
	0 - 3 3 - 6	Ministry of Social Affairs and Ministry of Culture (Youth Services) (two Länder)
	5 - 6	Ministry of Culture (only for the experimental 'Vorklassen' and 'Eingangstufen' projects - approximately 5% - now disappearing in some Länder)
Belgium	0 - 3	Ministry of Health
	2½- 6	Ministry of National Education and Culture
Denmark	0 - 6	Ministry of Social Affairs
	6 - 7	Ministry of Education
France	0 - 3	Ministry of Health (and some 3 - 6 establishments)
	2 - 6	Ministry of Education
Ireland	0 - 4	Ministry of Health
	4 - 6	Ministry of Education
Italy	0 - 3	Regions
	3 - 6	Ministry of Public Instruction (Law 1968)
Luxembourg	0 - 4	Ministry of Health
	4 - 6	Ministry of Education
Netherlands	0 - 4	Ministry of Cultural Affairs, Recreation and Social Work
	4 - 6	Ministry of Education and Science
United Kingdom (England and Wales)	0 - 5	Ministry of Health and Social Security
	3 - 5	Ministry of Education and Science
(Scotland)	0 - 5	Secretariat of State for Scotland

Table 2

Administration of pre-school establishments

Federal Republic of Germany	23%		Public sector, contribution from families;	
	73%		On the initiative of youth organizations public subsidy, contribution from families;	
	4%		Private sector, not subsidized.	
Belgium	Wallonia	Flanders		
	1/3	19%	State sector, free;	Financed by the State.
	1/3	21%	Local authority sector, free	
	1/3	60%	Independent sector (denominational) small contribution from families	
Denmark			Pre-school classes, local authority sector, free kindergartens:	
	32.5%		State	
	32.5%		local authority	
	35 %		parents.	
France	85%		State, free;	
	15%		Private sector (generally denominational), nursery classes 'under contract' subsidized by the State, small contribution from families, private kindergartens.	
Ireland	96%		State, almost free, small contribution from parents for school supplies;	
	4%		Private sector, not subsidized.	
Italy	32%		State, free;	
	68%		- local authority sector, half free; - denominational sector, receiving a contribution from the State and from families; - private sector (very small).	
Luxembourg			Local authorities (two-thirds subsidized by the State), free.	
Netherlands	1/3		Public sector, financed by the State, administered by the towns and the State;	
	2/3		Private sector, mostly denominational, financed entirely by the State, in some cases a small contribution from families.	
United Kingdom (England and Wales)	94%		Public sector (LEA) 60% subsidized by the State, the remainder by local authorities, free for families;	
	6%		Private sector, sometimes 50% subsidized by the State, financial contribution from families (excluding play groups).	
(Scotland)			Public sector, free; Private sector (play groups are sometimes subsidized by the local authorities).	

Table 3

School attendance periods

	Pre-school period	Possible commencement of compulsory school attendance	Period of compulsory schooling
Federal Republic of Germany	3 years to 6 years[1]	5 years 9 months	6 years-15 years
Belgium	Pre-school nursery unit: 18 months to 2 1/2 years or 3 years Nursery school: 2 1/2 years to 6 years	5 years 9 months[1]	6 years-14 years
Denmark	2 1/2 years to 6 years	6 years 7 months	7 years-16 years
France	2 years to 6 years 6 months[1]	5 years 9 months[1]	6 years-16 years
Ireland	4 years to 6 years 8 months	5 years 9 months	6 years-15 years
Italy	3 years to 6 years 6 months[1]	5 years 9 months	6 years-14 years
Luxembourg	4 years to 6 years 8 months	6 years	6 years-15 years
Netherlands	4 years to 7 years 3 months (maximum)	5 years 10 months	6 years-15 years
United Kingdom (England and Wales)	2 1/2 years to 5 years	4 years 9 months	5 years-16 years
(Scotland)	2 years to 5 years	4 years 6 months	5 years-16 years

[1] The ages given in this Table may sometimes be changed by children staying on in the nursery school or being allowed to move up early to the first year primary.

Table 4

Number of children in pre-school establishments

	1970/71	1972/73	1973/74	1974/75	1975/76
Federal Republic of Germany[1]	1 195 668	1 385 467	1 463 981	1 653 583	1 800 000
Belgium[1]	459 086	443 868	442 666	442 032	438 964
Denmark[1]					
- pre-school classes	20 874	37 638	41 356	42 932	44 884
- kindergartens	61 678	90 938	93 000	95 030	95 885
France[1]	2 213 346	2 370 614	2 457 744	2 543 269	2 608 431
Ireland[1]	131 492	135 161	136 435	132 063	136 191
Italy[1]	1 586 785	1 686 382	1 734 710	1 767 612	1 689 575
Luxembourg[1]	7 992	8 753	8 847	8 786	8 909
Netherlands[1]	493 447	497 076	508 279	515 951	521 390
United Kingdom[1] (England and Wales) (full-time only)	304 852	361 582	371 450	373 454	392 000
England[2] (part-time)	122 798	112 486	137 195	158 180	
Scotland[2]	12 381	16 558	19 628	20 462	22 668

[1] Eurostat 1976.

[2] Figures communicated by our official correspondents.

Table 5

Percentage of children attending a pre-school establishment

Federal Republic of Germany	3, 4 and 5 years	70,00%	
Belgium	5 years	100 %	
	4 years	97 %	
	3 years	90 %	
Denmark	6 years	87.3 %	
	5 and 6 years	60 %	
	3, 4, 5 and 6 years	35 %	
France	5 years	100 %	
	4 years	97 %	
	3 years	80 %	
	2 years	26 %	
Ireland	5 years	95 %	
	4 years	65 %	
Italy	3, 4 and 5 years	70.38%	
Luxembourg	5 years	100 %	
	4 years	90 %	
Netherlands	5 years	97 %	
	4 years	93 %	
		Full-time	Part-time
United Kingdom (England and Wales)	5 years	100 %	
	4 years	39.8 %	10.3%
	3 years	2.8 %	7.6%
	2 years	0.3 %	0.2%
		Nursery class	Primary school
(Scotland)	5 years	less than 1%	97 %
	4 years	23 %	12 %
	3 years	11 %	
	2 years	less than 1%	
		(excluding play groups)	

Table 6

Advancement of pre-school education in two countries

(in %)

Federal Republic of Germany

Percentage
of places available in the different Länder

	1970	1975
Baden-Württemberg	65.5	101.8
Bavaria	34.8	54.7
Berlin	27.0	44.3
Bremen	23.6	48.3
Hamburg	20.3	41.9
Hessen	36.7	71.9
Lower Saxony	18.9	38.3
North-Rhine-Westphalia	35.6	65.0
Rhineland-Palatinate	40.4	74.2
Saarland	46.0	75.8
Schleswig-Holstein	13.9	37.2

France

Percentage of children attending
a pre-school establishment by age group

	1964	1968	1972
4 years	70	80	90
3 years	40	50	70
2 years	10	13	20

Table 7

Numbers per class during normal school hours

	Groups of children		Adults
	Maximum standard	National average	
Federal Republic of Germany	25	20	1 fully qualified adult + 1/2 to 1 assistant
Belgium	30 present		1 qualified adult
Denmark	pre-school classes 22		1 qualified adult
	kindergartens 20		1 1/2 to 2 qualified adults + an assistant
France	35	31	1 qualified adult 1 unqualified assistant for 2 or 3 classes
Ireland	40	33	1 qualified adult
Italy	30 (schools in public sector)	25 35 (private schools)	For 3 sections 3 certificated teachers 1 certificated assistant teacher and 2 assistants
Luxembourg	30	20	1 qualified adult
Netherlands	31	25	1 qualified adult
United Kingdom (England and Wales)	23		I.S. 1 qualified adult N.S. 2 qualified adults but with qualification of a different standard
(Scotland)	20		

Table 8

Number of certificated teachers

(excluding assistants)

Belgium (1973/74)[1]	17 650 no men
Denmark (1976/77)[1]	1 519 including 199 men
France (1975/76)[1]	57 660 including 147 men
Ireland (1975/76)[1]	4 451 no men
Italy (1975/76)	63 523 no men
Luxembourg (1974/75)[1]	371 (the first man teacher obtained his certificate in 1977)
Netherlands (1975/76)[1]	19 405 no men
Federal Republic of Germany (1975)[2]	49 198
United Kingdom (1977)[2] (England and Wales)	6 000
(Scotland)	546 (full-time) 109 (part-time) of which 218 have an additional qualification for nursery school and 231 for nursery-infant

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[1] Eurostat 1976.

[2] Figures communicated by our correspondents.

Table 9

Status of personnel in pre-school education compared with primary education

		Difference in salary compared with primary education (approximate)
Federal Republic of Germany	'Sozialpädagoge': status and training almost equal 'Erzieher': lower status, lower standard of training	15%
Belgium	Lower status (for inspectors too) Tendency towards equality The standard of training has been made the same	10%
Denmark	Lower status, secondary studies incomplete Lower standard of training	30%
France	Equal status, equal training	none
Ireland	Equal status, equal training	none
Italy	Equivalent training	
Luxembourg	Former training (kindergarten teacher's certificate - abolished) New training law of 1973 (teaching certificate, pre-school education option)	none
Netherlands	Lower status Lower standard of training 1975-76 - in 1983 will be completely equal - in 1978 (August) 120 hours of lectures to supplement training - 1.1.78	16.6% 10%
United Kingdom (England and Wales)	Equal status Same standard of training	none
Scotland	Equal status Higher training since masters in charge of a pre-school class have to follow an additional year of preparation or supplementary lectures in accordance with several procedures	none

Table 10

Hours worked

		Year				Week	
		Number of days per year		Number of hours per year		Number of hours per week	
		Nursery	Primary	Nursery	Primary	Nursery	Primary
Federal Republic of Germany	children						
	teachers					40	28
Belgium	children	360 half days				26	26
	teachers	360 half days				28 min.	28 min.
Denmark	children	200 pre-school classes 320 kindergarten					27
	teachers	200 pre-school classes 320 kindergarten				40	40
France	children	150 approx.				27	27
	teachers	152	152			27	27
Ireland	children	184	184	859	859	23 1/2	23 1/2
	teachers	184	184				
Italy	children					32	24 to 30
	teachers					36	24
Luxembourg	children	200	200			23 to 29	29
	teachers	200	200			29	27
Netherlands	children	200	200				
	teachers	200	200			32	
United Kingdom (England and Wales)	children			1 300	1 300	25	25
	teachers			1 300	1 300	25	25
(Scotland)	children					20 to 25	
	teachers					34 (being revised)	

Table 11

Retirement age

Federal Republic of Germany	60 → 65
Belgium	New system: 60 years for the three sectors
Denmark	67 → 70
France	55 → 60
Ireland	60 → 68
Italy	65
Luxembourg	60 → 65
Netherlands	65
United Kingdom	Men 65 Women 60

Table 12

Percentage of total expenditure on education devoted to pre-school education

Belgium	7.1%
Ireland	8.5%
Italy	4.2%
Netherlands	6.3%
United Kingdom	0.4% (excluding 5-year-olds) (nursery schools only)

Source: Eurostat 1973.

Part B

PAPERS OF A COLLOQUIUM ON
PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION IN EUROPE - PROSPECTS IN THE COMMUNITY

organized by the Commission in cooperation with
the French Ministry of Education
at the Centre International d'Etudes Pédagogiques at Sèvres,
21-23 May 1979

1. WORKING PAPERS PREPARED BY MME GOUTARD

A - OBJECTIVES OF THE SEMINAR

This seminar is part of a study programme being carried out by the Directorate-General for Research, Science and Education of the Commission of the European Communities. The programme is based on point 21 (a) of the Resolution of the Council and of the Ministers of Education meeting within the Council of 9 February 1976, which provides for 'exchange of views and experience on concepts and trends in order to identify specific areas in which joint action might be undertaken' and, amongst these, the special study of 'the organization of nursery education and of its links with primary education, as well as the organization of primary education itself, in such a way as to give all children the opportunity of benefiting from access to secondary education, with special reference to the interests of underprivileged groups'.

In September 1977, in order to get one section of this programme under way, the Commission asked a French expert, Mme M. Goutard, to carry out a special study on pre-school education in the countries of the Community with the help of correspondents appointed by the Governments of Member States.

This study was carried out from a realistic point of view, taking into account pre-school education as it is, in fact, organized in the nine Member States and attempting to open up new horizons for the Community which, none the less, respect the various different trends and structures and everything which constitutes prerogatives of the individual Member States in the sphere of education.

The result was a document entitled 'Current problems in the field of pre-school education in the countries of the European Community' which is intended as a basis for discussion at the Sèvres Seminar.

Without going into the problem of nursery education as a whole, this study is restricted to considering such education as it is actually organized in various institutions which are to a greater or lesser degree integrated into the various educational systems, and to studying the link between these establishments and families, communities and primary schools. By considering whether a European attitude can give a new dimension to the education provided for young children, endeavours are made in it open up new horizons for Community measures in this sphere.

Far from being static, our educational systems undergo constant change and some reforms are undoubtedly modelled on what is being done in other countries. However, concerted Community-scale action by the Nine would seem to promise greater progress as such action is more outward-looking and problems can be tackled in broader contexts. In combining our forces we must, first of all, reach agreement on essentials, looking beyond individual external characteristics and, secondly, seek out openings for progress in a new context, specifically created by the Community itself, as opposed to the independent basis on which each State has proceeded so far. In short, we will have to direct our efforts to defining the essentials with greater clarity and to projecting ourselves more effectively into a complex reality, two processes which go hand in hand since, as has been demonstrated repeatedly in the arts and sciences, a return to fundamental and original issues is the source of the most significant innovations and reveals the complexity of the situation in a clearer light.

With this in mind, the discussion group leaders and I have decided to pu two questions to you which we regard as essential and which will immediately make the child the focus of our discussions.

The first concerns the young child's specific needs and rights in the various social and cultural settings in which he may find himself. If he did not have specific needs, we would obviously not be talking about pre-school or infant education but only about education pure and simple, possibly distinguishing between compulsory and non-compulsory schooling. However, given that education of the young child exists, it must be a form in itself and not modelled on or assimilated to other forms of education. Age presents certain difficulties in this context since the pre-school establishments of our various countries cater for children from the age of anything between 2 and 7 or even 8. Blanket solutions are therefore impossible as the specific circumstances of this European programme make it necessary for us to base our discussions on the de facto situation, as I have already explained, which accounts for my use of the term 'pre-school education' which may be unsatisfactory in certain respects but our task at this colloquium is too important for us to waste time in quibbling over words.

The various sub-themes relating to different kinds of needs ant their relative claims may seem too detailed for the brief time available to us but as all of us here today are fully acquainted with the problems and have given them considerable thought beforehand the scale of the task will serve as incentive to more intensive and disciplined work and each one of us will do his best to resist the temptation to describe what is being done in his particular country and instead concentrate on the questions to be answered.

The second question concerns the conclusions to be drawn from the initial solutions proposed. However, our intention is not to formulate a standard model of the ideal educational system, but to pinpoint the qualities required of pre-school education if it is to satisfy the varied needs of all children and guarantee the rights inherent in these needs. This list of desirable qualities will have to be matched by common action that can help clarify and promote them. In my chapter on 'Future prospects' I put forward a number of proposals that are consistent with and based on the experiences of Member States and might be a source of further progress and common enrichment. It is up to you to make a critical and constructive assessment of these proposals and to supplement them by many other suggestions. It is essentially this creative effort we expect of you in the hope that you will find this project so stimulating that you will not grudge the considerable effort involved.

In order to reply to the questions we must answer and to suggest suitable and fruitful action within our particular legal and administrative framework we must be sure of what we are doing and thus move forward boldly yet cautiously. We must bear in mind both what we do and do not know and distinguish between our educational powers and our rights over the child, since power is not necessarily accompanied by a right.

The present awareness of the importance of a child's earliest years has resulted in greater attention being focused on young children on whom we try to impress our social, cultural and even political views. Frequently children resist, but obviously the better we manage to understand and control the dynamics of change the more impact we will make. Caution will therefore be necessary. Man's frenzied efforts have already produced ecological disasters. Those who follow biological progress are as justified in fearing the possible ill effects as in hoping for the desired benefits. Will the time come when psychology reaches the stage where similar ill effects can be feared? That day may even have arrived without our yet being fully aware of it.

In most countries the main concern of teaching at the nursery school stage has been to avoid subjecting young children to the straitjacket of an overformalized educational system and to provide more suitable educational stimuli complementing what the child may learn in his own home. In my study I have tried to show the dependence of pre-school education on the two major traditional educational institutions, namely the family and the compulsory school system, and to point to the efforts currently being made everywhere to establish closer contact with these institutions. Yet the greatest efforts would seem to have been made in those countries where they were least necessary. It is these very countries which, for many years now, have most effectively integrated pre-school education into the educational system as a whole and are now contemplating even closer links, possibly even going too far in that direction.

Similarly it is in those countries where, for a variety of reasons, families have been most involved in the organization of education that the greatest efforts have been made to intensify this role, sometimes with the result that the pre-school establishment is run more in the interests of adults than for the good of the children. Here again the danger of possibly going too far in this direction cannot be overlooked. It is not hard to understand that the most radical reforms have been in the countries least hampered by institutional or traditional restrictions, but the fact that something is desirable does not necessarily mean that it should be taken to extremes. Here again a clearsighted approach is necessary.

At a time when the birth-rate in our countries is falling and economic difficulties call for cutbacks, how advisable is it to slow down the development of pre-school education? Surely now is also the time to try to improve the quality of such education which could indeed prove instrumental in boosting the birth-rate.

Wherever pre-school education is offered, no matter on what scale, it must be of a high standard. It is mainly with a view to improving the standard of establishments that have the advantage of already existing that you are asked to propose common action.

The aim of Community action cannot be to achieve uniformity since Europe's strength lies in the diversity of our countries' experience. Instead it should seek to foster creativity, directed towards sound and progressive goals, in the Member States. Though some coordination of educational objectives may seem desirable it is perfectly possible to incorporate such objectives in a wide range of activities taking account of the diversity of national, regional and local, as well as individual, situations since each teacher and child is unique in his experience and in what he expects of life.

During a seminar of such limited duration, there can be no question of carrying out a thourough examination of the problem of educating the very young from birth nor of trying to rethink everything anew, as was attempted during a study lasting several years carried out be eminent international institutions. With the more modest aim of achieving immediate effectiveness, the Commission in Brussels hopes that those attending this seminar will provide them with explanations and guidance to determine what can be done in relation to what already exists in a spirit of cultural cooperation and mutual aid, so as to enable the Commission to continue and improve its educational programme.

B - KEY QUESTIONS TO BE USED AS TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

(1) What are the special needs and rights of young children as regards pre-school education? (The various categories of children and ages at which these special needs become apparent will be considered).

(2) How should special-purpose pre-school education designed to meet the specific needs and rights of young children by organized? What should this special purpose be? How could the quality of it be guaranteed most effectively (administration, training of staff, etc.)?

These questions will be studied and the question raised as to what action could be taken at Community level to improve the present state of affairs taking into account the various current situations and referring more especially to the chapter on 'future prospects' in the study by Mme Goutard referred to above, which will be analysed in a critical and constructive manner.

Subordinate questions

Physical development

Do pre-school-age children have greater or more distinctive requirements as regards physical or sensory welfare, health, movement and rest, prevention, supervision or protection than those of older children?

Emotional development

Do pre-school-age children have special emotional characteristics? Is emotional life more important at this age? Does it condition other spheres of development?

Mental development

Do pre-school-age children have a way of thinking, a view of the world, methods of learning and understanding their own particular situation? Are they entitled to their own way of thinking even if this is transitory?

Social development

What type(s) of special social experience does a pre-school-age child need? Do groups of young children have a special image? Are they entitled to have an identity, an originality, of their own?

Can children of this age make an active and creative contribution to the construction of their small child-like community provided that the educational climate is favourable?

Personality development

What are the most important factors in developing the personality of young children? Can this personality be dissociated from all the capabilities of each child? Can a child's personality be developed perfectly if his total integrity is not recognized? (Since any backwardness or handicap is only apparent in relation to a norm.)

Are the rate and methods of development an integral part of children's personalities?

Relationships between adults and children

Young children are particularly dependent on adults. Is this dependence a one-way or two-way process? What special contribution do young children make to adults, and what very special contribution do adults make to young children?

Can relations between adults and young children be on a basis of equality involving mutual respect and recognition?

In which major spheres are young children already autonomous?

Family

Should belonging to a family nucleus be regarded in terms of belonging-possession or in terms of belonging-participation?

What other social situations is a young child entitled to participate in? What human situations are open to him? What social and family measures encourage better participation by the young child in these various social entities and human situations?

Socio-cultural environment

Can a child feel appreciated and his development promoted regardless of the development of his own family and his own socio-cultural environment?

The fact that a child belongs to a given environment gives rise to a special type of experience in this child. The diversity of these types of experience enriches the child's world. What conditions would be necessary for all children to benefit from it?

School system

Is it desirable to send young children to 'school'? Should the nursery establishment be a 'school' in the usual sense of the word? What type of structure is best suited to the specific needs of young children? What links should be established between this structure and the existing school system?

Society as a whole

What are children's rights vis-à-vis social institutions? Opinion trends, doctrines, ideologies? Means of information, advertising, mass media? Technological forces, labour organization? Habitat and natural environment?

What are children's needs and rights concerning their own future and the future of humanity?

Comment

These very broad questions should be considered mainly from the point of view of their effect on the organization of pre-school education.

2. REPORTS OF THE FOUR DISCUSSION GROUPS

Discussion Group 1

Chairman: Mrs Peacocke
Rapporteur: Mr E.B. Granshaw

(1) There were representatives of six Member States in the English speaking group - Denmark, the Federal Republic of Germany, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands and the United Kingdom.

(2) The Group were asked to consider two key questions:

(i) what are the needs and rights of young children as regards pre-school education?

(ii) how should special-purpose pre-school education designed to meet the specific needs and rights of young children be organized? What should this special purpose be? How could the quality of it be guaranteed most effectively?

The first key question

(3) The Group considered that it was difficult to isolate specific areas of development of a child but in order to facilitate a uniform method of approach to the questions under consideration they attempted to examine each of the prescribed areas of development set out in Working Document No 2.

(4) There was a problem in identifying what was meant by the term 'pre-school child'. Is it the baby, the toddler, the 3-6 year old? In the view of the Group each child has his specific needs at each stage of his development. These are determined by the nature of the child, his parents, their socio-economic grouping, cultural background, environment, his peers and so on. Whenever reference is made to the pre-school child in this report, it should be understood that the Group are aware that a child is on a gradient of growth.

Physical development

(5) The specific needs of the pre-school child are:

(i) The need to survive. Suitable health care; food, warmth and protection.

(ii) Supervised safe space i.e. provide adequate and challenging equipment. Particularly important in view of family tendency to spend many hours in front of TV and for those children in a restricted environment such as high-rise flats.

(iii) Planners should be made aware of the needs of young children to avoid the repetition of difficulties such as those that arise from high rise developments and to enable them to create a suitable and challenging environment for young children and their mothers.

(6) The Group saw parental involvement as a vital factor in meeting the physical needs of the under 5s. The status of parenthood must be recognized.

Emotional development

(7) The Group considered that pre-school age children required:

(a) a background of stability of personnel, place and daily experience to ensure feelings of security, predictability and control of the environment; and

(b) exposure to all areas of human endeavour and culture (play, music drama and gymnastics) to provide opportunities for success (positive self concept) and to lay a pattern for later leisure activities.

(8) In connection with (a) above the Group considered that it was vital for whoever took the child to a place which was new to stay with him long enough to introduce him. At home he can always run to one of his parents. In his first experience away from home he may feel trapped once the door is closed. He must have someone who knows and cares for him. The Group therefore would wish the Community to encourage Member States to promote publicity on the needs of the pre-school child and its parents with a view to creating a favourable climate of opinion.

(9) It would also be helpful if social policies in member countries enabled parents to choose whether or not to stay at home with their children during their early years. The Group saw no easy solution to this problem and agreed that a study should be undertaken of provision in various countries with regard to the needs of the young child and the working mother.

Mental development

(10) The Group were unanimous in their view that young children were entitled to their own way of thinking whether or not this was transitory.

(11) There was a need for an individual approach to each child's needs with a special emphasis on language development.

(12) To give maximum help to the child, the parents must be involved from the earliest stage. There are also implications for pupil/teacher ratios and teacher training.

Social development

(13) The pre-school child has a particular need to become a member of a group to learn how to integrate and interact with his peers.

Personality development

(14) The Group view was that the constant dynamic interaction of physical, emotional, mental, social and spiritual development made up the total personality of the child.

Relationships between adults and children

(15) Adults and children are interdependent. Children are dependent on adults for everything, e.g. food, warmth, clothing, care and learning. Adults derive from children a sense of stability and security for the future (i.e. continuation of the line).

(16) It is no longer the accepted pattern of stable relationships that there will be children whereas in the past, parenthood was seen as part of the usual pattern of adult development. The voluntary acceptance of parenthood might provide a better basis for relationships between parents and their children which the community could foster by encouraging Member States to provide programmes of education for parents.

(17) The relationship between children and adults can and should be on a basis of equality involving mutual respect and recognition.

(18) From a very early age children are autonomous in that they may refuse to eat, excrete, breathe or sleep. Later, children are autonomous in their selection and performance of activities and use of the environment. Children must be given opportunities to succeed and fail to foster their creative sense and help their social development.

Family

(19) The child and the family should have an intimate relationship with respect and responsibility on both sides. The child should be encouraged gradually to share the attention of one adult (e.g. the teacher) with other children. The child should also share whenever possible in the activities of the parents whose responsibility it is to secure the safety of the child and ensure his security (e.g. visits to shops, train journeys, etc.). It is beneficial for the parent as well as the child to have interests beyond the immediate family. The child needs compensation for the lack of an extended family in today's world. The parents must decide whether this should be through playgroups, mother and toddler groups or other activities.

Socio-cultural environment

(20) If a child could never rise above its socio-cultural environment many

children would be doomed to a life of low expectation. The Group believed that it was the responsibility of society and of education in particular to ensure that children were given every opportunity to develop to their full capacity.

(21) There is a broad range of normality for children and it is very rare to find a child without some positive strength. However, whatever the child brings in language, culture or experience must be accepted by the teacher who will find that not all these experiences will be enriching. Deprivation takes many forms and is not confined to any particular social group.

The second key question

(22) How should special-purpose pre-school education designed to meet the specific needs or rights of young children be organized? What should this special purpose be? How could the quality of it be guaranteed most effectively (administration, training of staff, etc.).

(23) The Group considered this question impossible to answer because of their lack of knowledge of what happens in other European countries. Pre-school education is not entirely a preparation for primary school. The child has a right to live for the present and not only for the future. The Group believed that any form of pre-school provision should be flexible.

Action

(24) It is suggested that the EC should examine what information is already available taking account of work carried out by other international organizations on pre-school provision in the Member States, in the first instance and then supplement this by specific information collected from each individual Member State with a view to providing a foundation on which discussions for the future development of pre-school education wthin the community can be built.

Conclusion

(25) The representatives on the English-speaking group found the exchange of ideas invaluable but all the States represented had decentralized administration systems which could not be expected to be willing to change their existing arrangements for the pre-school child without very full consideration of the issues involved. For this reason the Group considered that it would be premature to make recommendations other than of a general nature, designed at this stage to make for better awareness of the special needs of pre-school children and of the provision that already exists.

(26) To summarize, the main points made in discussion by the Group were:

(i) that Member States should do whatever they can to improve awareness of the needs of pre-school children and of their parents;

(ii) that a study should be made of social policies in a number of countries which enabled parents to choose whether or not to stay at home with their young children;

(iii) that Member States should consider promoting education for parenthood which has a better chance of success in a world where many adults choose whether or not to have children; and

(iv) that information about provision for the pre-school child, calling first on information already available, should be collected as a basis for a future conference on the organization of pre-school education.

Discussion Group 2
Chairman: Miss Abbadie
Rapporteur: Miss Voisin

THEME 1

The Working Party's discussions hinged around a number of general themes on, firstly the child and secondly, the pre-school institution.

The child is an integrated being. His development must be looked at in its entirety and diversity, as no single aspect can be taken in isolation. Furthermore, each child is a unique individual, dominated by his affective life. The latter, along with his individual characteristics, must be taken fully into account in his education if the final goal - to develop each child's personality - is to be achieved.

The child is an individual in the course of development. He has specific needs, taking into account firstly the qualitative and quantitative importance of the growth - in all its aspects - which takes place between the ages of 2 and 6 to 8, conditioning - and indeed determining - his development and secondly, his relative dependence on adults due to his age and lack of experience. This must not be allowed to obscure the fact that, at every age, specific needs exist and must be taken into account at all levels of the educational system.

The child cannot be considered independently of his family, cultural or socio-economic environment; in addition, man's needs in the spiritual, aesthetic and moral spheres, must not be neglected. This takes on a particular importance in the case of the education of migrant children.

As first priority the pre-school institution must, in its conception and organization, take into account the children's basic needs and not, as is unfortunately too often the case, the needs created by the socio-economic context (parents' working conditions, living conditions, etc.). This clearly implies a number of changes in the following:

- school structures; greater operational flexibility must be sought, with a view to an improved adaptation to each individual child;
- teachers' qualifications. They must receive a high-level training regarding knowledge of the child and his development and mentality, and also to develop their powers of observation and foster a reflective approach to teaching methods;
- the school system as a whole, which must develop in line with the children's basic needs and the changes in our societies.

The concept of basic needs goes hand in hand with that of basic rights, with all that implies regarding the means and facilities employed:

- from the biological and physiological points of view, the child needs space and movement. The architectural layout of pre-school establishments and their equipment should be the subject of detailed research. The child also has the right to the early detection and treatment of handicaps, which calls for the development and efficient organization of medical and social services;
- on the affective level, young children must be offered a stable, friendly and tolerant human environment;
- as regards intellectual development, the children's specific ways of thinking must be understood and respected, since their thought patterns, at first very different, gradually and take adult form after a series of adaptive changes. These thought patterns must not only be acknowledged but recognized and exercised.
  The part played by action in the formation of ideas should be particularly stressed. Ideas themselves cannot be taught: they form spontaneously and it is the child who moulds his own development. On this point, the important and decisive role of games must be emphasized.
  The child's possibilities must neither be underestimated nor overestimated. The danger is equally great in either case. In this field, the role of the adult is decisive. It is he who organizes the environment, provokes and exploits situations, deliberately intervenes at the right moment in the light of what he knows of children and particularly of the child concerned.

For the young child, schooling is an early social experience which enables him to discover others, particularly his equals, within a society in which he has a different status from that which he has in the family. This discovery of others leads to self-awareness.

Common experiences and the development of plans and shared emotions all favour the emergence of a feeling of belonging to a group and give rise to the development of rules of life. Resistance from members of the group brings about an awareness of the idea of mutual tolerance: within the group, the necessary aggression can find expression and be absorbed. However, the group must not be too burdensome and, for it to retain all its educational value, the child must be able to get away from it.

The role of adults in the education of a young child is also very important. The attitude of the adult, the welcome he reserves for the child, the way he looks at it, are highly significant at the affective level. Child/adult relationships cannot and must not be relationships of equality but must be established on the basis of mutual respect.

To ensure continuity and coherence in education, the pre-school institution must include parents in this major undertaking by giving them the chance to take part, dynamically and positively, in some of the institution's activities. This will lead them to an improved knowledge and understanding of children and give them a better grasp of the different aspects of their responsibility.

To conclude, the importance of the role of pre-school education should be stressed. The pre-school institution makes a very positive contribution to the education of the child who, although very young, needs to be away from the family. It is therefore essential to offer him educational possibilities within a friendly and tolerant school organized along flexible administrative and education lines.

Pre-school, primary and secondary education should be thought of as a continuous process aimed at aiding the development of each child while avoiding inopportune or excessive demands on him.

THEME 2

Future community action

The proposals made by the different members of the Group illustrate a marked interest in what is being done elsewhere, not with the intention of reaching uniformity, but with the idea of improving knowledge of education systems leading, eventually, to sharing and exchanges.

With this in mind, the following proposals were made:

- organization of seminars on training programmes and on the comparative study of different approaches to education in the Community countries;
- opening up national seminars to foreign observers;
- exchanges of documents (songs, nursery rhymes, traditional games, etc.) and teacher training staff who, after a training period on the spot, could meet in order to draw up a European synthesis, proposals relating to the various themes (education of handicapped children, renovation of dilapidated and unsuitable buildings, etc.);
- comparative studies in the different countries, on the following themes:
  - relationship between the family and the school,
  - connection between the nursery school and the primary school,
  - role of training personnel in the context of a scheme to redistribute and expand the functions of the different parties involved (parents, teachers, etc.),
  - organization of the day.

All this evidently presupposes the drawing up and circulation of documents and this aspect of the problem is by no means a minor one. The establishment of a European documentation bank would be particularly welcome.

Discussion Group 3
Chairman: Mme Limiti
Rapporteur: Mme Lauretta

Before proposing specific Community measures, the Italian and French language working group (led by Giuliana Limiti) believes that the following considerations should be borne in mind:

(1) Pre-school education should be geared to individual social and cultural environments closely reflecting local conditions, in order to bring out their positive aspects and at the same time seek a broader outlook.

(2) The child should not be regarded as an abstraction but seen against his own background and in his family, social, institutional and geographical contexts, which are closely inter-related. However, the child's essential and vital needs should take priority over other requirements.

(3) The child's rights cannot simply be seen in terms of an assessment of his needs; account must be taken of his whole personality and the quality of the educational measures proposed.

(4) A series of new laws of some significance have been adopted in various countries recently, such as the legal authorization to allow men to teach at pre-school level and the protection of expectant mothers; although the working group regards this as a step forward, it considers that if it is to have any effect in practice, the process must be accompanied by the provision of information and meaningful preparation.

(5) There should be a return to pre-school education linked to society and nature, eliminating the excessive specialization of educational functions. The latter results in the child being considered in terms of compartmentalized skills and not, as he should be, as an indivisible whole. Furthermore, it accentuates the institutional/administrative aspect of the nursery school, i.e. the readiness to sacrifice everything in the name of blind bureaucracy based on regulations rather than vital creativity.

With these considerations in mind, the working group has pinpointed the following priority requirements:

(1) Preventive measures should be introduced during the period of pregnancy, confinement and birth in order to avoid the possibility of subsequent repercussions resulting from the very lack of such measures.

(2) A healthy and balanced diet is necessary, besides information and education on the latter and, if necessary collaboration in supervising and maintaining it.

(3) Preventive medical care should be provided for young children in pre-school institutions accompanied by courses in hygiene for the staff.

(4) Pre-school establishments should be set up with few pupils and small classes in order to personalize the teaching relationship as much as possible.

(5) Free reign should be given to children's ability to express themselves, avoiding the adult tendency to over-protection.

(6) Elderly people should be brought into contact with children thereby activating the affective link between the generations and encouraging the de-

velopment of the emotional aspect of the child's language through the elderly people's wealth of human experience, the positive interplay between child and interlocutor and the educational role of story-telling and the spoken word.

(7) Teachers should receive advanced vocational preparation and a check should be carried out to ensure that their interior equilibrium is such that they can teach with the mental and moral attitude necessary to understand the nuances of the relationship with the child who, it should be borne in mind, communicates with other people in various 'languages', including silence. Even if they fulfil all the administrative and legal requirements, teachers who lack the necessary interior stability should not be put into contact with children. This decision should form part of the social control relating to any measure involving children.

For these reasons, the working group proposes the following Community measures:

(1) Common rules applying to all children in the Community for the standardization of medical check-ups and dietary supervision.

(2) The collection of data and research results on education during early childhood and joint codification of statistical data on the under six age group. Research into nutritional habits of the population and in pre-school establishments to provide Member States with additional information on the subject.

(3) Health education syllabuses in nursery schools for non-nursing and non-medical staff based on a knowledge of paediatrics. Health training for teachers and possibly pilot schemes.

(4) Involvement of elderly people, parents and secondary school pupils in pre-school education to prevent the infant's world from becoming isolated whilst teachers continue to fulfil their irreplaceable function as affective and educational reference points. Pilot schemes might be suggested in various countries of the Community and should be followed closely.

(5) The establishment of a Community centre for pre-school education in the Member States, with the following objectives:
  (a) to collect didactic experience, examples of new ideas and creativity in pre-school education;
  (b) to collect, and possibly publish, folk music culture, e.g. laments, nursery rhymes, songs, etc., together with popular traditional fables;
  (c) to collect information on pre-school educational structures;
  (d) to establish an inter-disciplinary consultative committee to draw up proposals for a reform of the training syllabuses for nursery teachers, endeavouring to identify the skills necessary for a teacher to understand the needs of children. The proposals put forward could lead to the setting-up of refresher courses and pilot training schemes for teachers;
  (e) to list - and establish contact between - universities and scientific research centres dealing with various problems concerning early childhood;
  (f) to compare European experience with that in other parts of the world;
  (g) to encourage the use of the media for educational purposes, especially television, with a view to the eventual direct participation by children in the creative production of programmes.

(6) The establishment of a statute for nursery school teachers which defines:

(a) the academic training necessary (inter-disciplinary syllabuses), possibly aligned with that of general school teachers;
(b) field of competence in relation to situations and age groups;
(c) professional ethics as the basis of respect for each individual child;
(d) mobility of staff not only as a legal provision to be complied with, but as a valuable means to enhance training;
(e) a legal instrument to promote the harmonization of educational structures.

(7) The examination, from the viewpoint of the child's interests, of existing laws on pre-school education at local, regional and national levels.

Discussion Group 4
Chairman: Mrs Tumbrägel
Rapporteur: Mrs Beitl

On the basis of the questions posed and the detailed working document there follows a summary of the Group's deliberations:

I - Special needs and requirements of young children

(1) A child must be seen in relation to the full development of his personality and with reference to his physical, mental, emotional and social requirements. The Group decided that the following points were particularly important in relation to young children:

- It is important for adults to take account of the natural pace of the child's life and day and give him adequate opportunity for movement.
- The child should have a feeling of security, peace, acceptance and attention in order to achieve total stability, also as regards his emotional development.
- In addition, the child's healthy curiosity should be encouraged, to enable him to identify with adults, and his special abilities and weaknesses should be understood.
- Adults should be helped to understand the means of communication open to the child and further develop and encourage them by providing a challenging environment.

(2) The young child is particularly dependent on and involved with his family and his immediate surroundings. In this connection various factors might be borne in mind:

- upbringing within the family and the structure of the family (complete or incomplete family, parents working, social background, migrant workers etc.).

- However, it is particularly important for the young child to have social contacts with other children and other persons outside the family circle.

II - Consequences for the detailed planning of pre-school education

The implication to be drawn is that organized of pre-school education must meet all these requirements. In detail, this means for example:

1. The organization of the pedagogical aspects of pre-school education

- The pedagogical aspects must be organized as a self-contained unit, tailored to the specific situation and aimed at the individual child.
- The basic element of this organization is play in its various forms.
- This presupposes that the premises available will be adequate and divided into areas for play, movement and rest periods. (For this reason the space should be divided up into rest zones and activity zones).
- Every attempt should be made to ensure that pre-school education is not a scaled-down version of school.
- The group must be of such dimensions that the individual child can find his way around within it.
- Pre-school education should involve various forms of collaboration between parents, children and teachers belonging to the pre-school institution (e.g. parents' councils, parent groups, meetings between parents, joint planning and organization of group actions, involvement of the parents in the planning of the pedagogical elements, parents' participation in the kindergarten, visits to the parents' home).

2. Position and role of the nursery school in relation to the family

- Pre-school education should establish links with the family and work with it to extend the child's experience of life and operate alongside the family as a supplementary means of bringing up the child.
- Pre-school institutions should be organized flexibly, including as regards open and closing times, to suit the needs of working parents provided this does not involve undue impositions on the children.
- The State should be required to provide voluntary organized pre-school education for all children and where necessary work to convince parents of the desirability of pre-school education. The Working Group rejected the idea of compulsory pre-school education.

3. Position of the nursery school in the Community

Pre-school education should not just be there for the family but should also involve the surrounding society in the wider sense in its further pedagogical task and should collaborate with the social services.

4. Organization of the transition from pre-school education to school

The members of the Group agreed that from the child's point of view there was need for some continuity between pre-school and school itself. At the same time the special and valuable features of pre-school education should be preserved. Play as a means of learning in the pre-school situation should also be a feature of formal education, particularly in the early days at school. The pattern of organization differs from country to country but the important thing is for the two institutions to cooperate with each other.

5. Possibilities of helping handicapped children via pre-school institutions

As far as possible handicapped children should be integrated into normal institutions, where necessary by recruiting specialized teachers such as special school teachers, speech therapists, physiotherapists, and psychologists.

Early identification and treatment is necessary in the case of handicap.

6. Possibilities of encouraging the development of foreign children by letting them attend pre-school

- Foreign children should be integrated with the children of the host country, without alienating them from their own culture.

- The pre-school learning situation can benefit in general from the respect and support given by each group to the culture and language of the others. This also involves the elimination of prejudices and stereotype images.

- The important thing is to involve the foreign parents and to give the teachers regular in-service training to improve their specialist qualifications.

- Specialist foreign teachers should, where possible, be involved to supplement pre-school work with children and parents.

- In all cases a pragmatic approach tailored to local conditions is required.

7. Training and in-service training

There is no uniform training pattern within Europe. Existing structures should be retained. EC proposals to improve training can be seen in terms of exchanges of teaching staff. There is some doubt as to whether training should be given at university level. Cooperation between the various categories of teacher (school teacher and pre-school teacher) is necessary.

III - Possible joint actions

European Centre

It is not yet clear how effective such a centre might be. The following possible tasks of a European Centre were discussed:

- Clearing house for European culture and publication of material in connection with it.
- Clearing house for the results of various experiments and model projects. Publication of comparative results.
- Clearing house for course material for pre-school education.
- Clearing house for audio-visual material (e.g. European television education programmes).
- Organization of exchanges between teaching staff.
- General: documentation, information and to some extent organization.
- The parents, the children and the teaching staff were seen as the partners in such a centre; in particular it was proposed that parents should be approached directly via this centre.

3. SYNTHESIS REPORT BY MME GOUTARD

Some participants had given the questionnaire careful study before arriving at Sèvres - in certain cases at preparatory meetings of their national delegations - and the ease with which the discussion groups were able to move beyond the strict outlines of raised in the questionnaire depended on the thoroughness of this prior study.

Furthermore, since the Chairmen of the discussion groups had, for efficiency's sake, been selected beforehand from amongst those who had been involved in the Commission programme from the outset, it did not take the four groups long to carry out some quite extensive and high quality work, thanks to the intensive efforts of these leaders, although this did sometimes give rise to moments of passing tension one or two cases.

Below we have set out a broad outline of this work, highlighting similarities and differences of opinion.

1. REPLIES TO THE QUESTION ON THE SPECIAL NEEDS OF YOUNG CHILDREN

The expression 'special' was interpreted ambiguously and gave rise to controversy. The question referred to special needs as compared with those of older children, but some participants interpreted it to mean 'special' in relation to clearly defined areas of experience, implying an inappropriate segregation of aspects of the child's personality This confusion may have stemmed from the sub-questions, which called for the listing of a whole range of needs.

Be that as it may, this ambiguity provided the opportunity to express forcefully and unanimously the need to consider the young child and his position in life as an integrated whole.

Despite misgivings about the expression 'special', examination of the reports from the dicussion groups shows that the participants as a whole considered that young children had needs which were very specific to their age or which were much more deeply felt at that age.

The following arguments were cited in support of this viewpoint:

- the concept of 'stages of development', which would be meaningless if growth were uniform and undifferentiated, with needs varying only in degree in the course of the child's development;
- acknowledgement of the decisive importance of this age for the individual's future;

- dependence on adults, which is particularly marked at this age.

There was general agreement concerning the following points:

(a) The young child needs as regards protection, hygiene and prevention are particularly great;

(b) he requires plenty of space and movement;

(c) his natural pace should be respected;

(d) he needs an environment offering great stability (people, places, habits, events, etc.);

(e) he needs to move outside his family circle to extend his social universe, but there should be no split between this new universe and his immediate family;

(f) he needs individual attention and must not be submerged in the group;

(g) since the function of adults is particularly important and decisive in the life of young children, the latter need parents and teachers who are extremely well prepared for their task.

Differences in attitude emerged concerning the relationship between adults and children. Somce consider that young children are in a position of total dependence whereas others perceive spheres of autonomy, and yet others consider that dependence is not unilateral and that a situation of interdependence exists. According to some the relations between adults and young children cannot and should not be based on equality bot on mutual respect. According to others, equality, consideration and mutual respect are necessary.

These divergences should be borne in mind, since they cannot but affect the overall concept of the significance of children for humanity as a whole, their place and rights in society and the type of education they need. Some clarification of the way in which the word 'equality' was interpreted would have made it possible to assess the extent of these differences more accurately.

2. ANSWERS TO THE QUESTION ON THE SPECIFIC NATURE OF PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION

The specific requirements described made it possible to define the special nature of pre-school education. There was total agreement on a number of points and partial agreement on others.

(a) Everyone acknowledged the fact that young children should be considered in terms of their whole personality and their particular situation in a given socio-cultural environment. Consequently, pre-school education as an institution cannot be standardized. A variety of situations and needs must be met by a variety of solutions. Structures endowed with administrative flexibility and adaptability are, therefore, necessary to meet different needs and keep up with developments occurring in society as a whole, in the surrounding community or in the children themselves. If rigid, formalized institutional models were set aside, pre-school education would be in a better position to display the necessary pragmatism to adapt to each individual case. In this way, children who are underprivileged in some way or other, such as the handicapped and the children of migrant workers, would be able to take greater advantage of institutions where they would otherwise be treated as outcasts or excluded altogether. Taking into account the universality of human beings, one of the discussion groups pointed out that pre-school education should be geared to individual social and cultural environments closely reflecting local conditions, in order to bring out the positive aspects and at the same time seek a broader outlook'.

(b) Since young children are particularly dependent on their families, everyone agreed on the vital importance of establishing a link between the pre-school establishment and the family, the latter also being regarded as an integrated whole, with its own characteristics, needs and educational responsibilities.
Differences emerged as regards the family's share of responsibility in the organization and operation of pre-school establishments. In particular, some participants argued that whilst pre-school education must be adjusted to the socio-economic requirements of families, it did not follow that the latter were compatible with the needs and interests of the children themselves; this led on to wider problems involving society and life styles, besides the education of parents (in which pre-school institutions may take part) and children's rights.
A close relationship with families would appear to be particularly beneficial for the children of migrant workers.

(c) In view of the great vulnerability of small children in all areas, pre-school education should be organized in close collaboration with social workers in the various social services and with the competent local authorities and the local community as a whole detection of handicaps, better social integration of families, etc.).

(d) Although everyone accepted the need for a liaison with primary education to improve continuity, there were major differences of opinion concerning the form it should take. The vast majority of participants thought that pre-school education could not be regarded as a preparation for primary school (although children who attend a pre-school establishment generally adapt more easily to primary school). Pre-school education should, first and foremost, cover the need for play, movement and rest periods peculiar to children of this age and certain participants even considered that any type of 'formalized' schooling should be avoided. Thus, educational continuity should not be sought through the standardization of institutional forms nor in the uniformity of types of educational structures. The working parties did not clearly specify how continuity was to be achieved if the principal concern was to adapt to the different needs arising at various stages in the child's development.

(e) Since early childhood is a delicate and precious period, of vital importance for the future, participants considered that greater attention should be paid to ensuring the necessary quality, quantity and stability of staff in nursery establishments. However, they did not agree on the vocational qualifications required. Some demanded university level training whereas others questioned the need for this. Many insisted on the need to have certain selection criteria of a non-academic nature in view of the human qualities necessary in this profession and some even warned against excessive 'professionalization' in the sphere of pre-school education. Bearing in mind the principle of general applicability, any form of 'specialization' was rejected by the participants, who were more inclined towards an extension of the areas of competence of teachers to enable them to cope better with the social aspect of their task.

(f) Some discussion groups raised the question of children's rights, which are clearly distinct from family rights and could not be seen merely as an inventory of immediate needs. Owing to lack of time, the special function of pre-school establishments as regards ensuring respect for these rights was not very clearly specified.

(g) Some participants felt that some form of social control over pre-school establishments, as over any action involving young children, was made even more indispensable by the fact that greater organizational and administrative flexibility was bound to give rise to a whole range of individual initiatives.

(h) Generally speaking participants were against the principle of compulsory attendance at a pre-school establishment, although some declared that it was the best means of guaranteeing that the children who needed it most would benefit.

(i) Lastly, one discussion group insisted on the need for educational establishments to be suitably designed, with safe and varied play areas to meet the special need for movement and rest periods of very young children.

3. POSSIBLE JOINT ACTION

Fears were expressed amongst participants that the Commission might take initiatives in an area which was the responsibility of national governments and which might tend towards standardization rather than the desired adaptation to local situations. The main concern of many of those present was to be better informed about what was being done in other countries, but they did not seem prepared to envisage joint activities.

However, in the end quite a number of proposals were made, particularly concerning documentation and exchanges. No unanimous decision was reached concerning action programmes as such.

(a) Information

- The participants would like an EC campaign to alert the general public and the competent authorities to the special needs of young children and inform them about existing situations.

- They also want information on the educational systems in other European (and non-European) countries.

(b) Documentation

- There was a unanimous proposal that data be collected on the popular cultural heritage in this area (fairy stories, fables, songs, counting rhymes, games, etc.).

Other proposals:

- To compile an inventory of research projects teaching experiments and recent or current innovations;
- to list - and establish contact between - universities and research centres dealing with early childhood;
- to compile an inventory of the audio-visual material available in each country (films, etc.);
- to establishment a statistical data bank.

(c) Studies and research projects

The following proposals were made by one or other of the discussion groups.

- A study should be made of a social policy which would provide parents with a real choice between bringing up their young children at home or sending them to a pre-school institution;
- a comparative study of pre-school education systems should be made with a view to pooling programmes on an experimental basis;
- a comparison should be made of what has been done in the various Member States as regards the:
  - relationship between the family and the school,
  - connection between the nursery school and primary school,
  - role of various members of the teaching staff,
  - organization of the day;
- research should be carried on into dietary practices in pre-school establishments and the different sections of the population.

(d) International conferences

Most people were in favour of these meetings, which could deal with various aspects of the organization of pre-school education once data had been collected.

(e) Exchanges

All the working parties were in favour of exchanges of teachers, documents and various projects.

The wish was also expressed that observers from other countries be invited to national symposia.

(f) Pilot projects

The only projects accepted unreservedly by all the participants were those mainly involving families:

- projects to promote parental education;

- use of mass media for educational purposes (with children possibly taking part);
- citizen participation in pre-school education (elderly persons, older pupils, etc.).

Those present at the symposium were much more reticent concerning projects directly connected with educational systems and the staff involved. Only one discussion group proposed refresher courses for 'pilot teachers' at European level.

(g) Drafting of European programmes

One of the dicussion groups proposed that Community programmes be drawn up in the spheres of:

- prevention, medical care and dietary supervision,
- staff training.

It wished to see a definition of the profession of nursery school teacher established at European level (see the report by the Italian language group).

As regards setting up a European Centre, as suggested in the study on 'Current pre-school education problems in the EC Member States', fears were expressed that it might prove ineffective and too bureaucratic. Some participants did not wish to see anything institutionalized. Most of those who readily accepted such an establishment saw it mainly as an information and documentation centre intended firstly for parents and local authorities and secondly for children and teachers, but aimed to a much lesser extent at the organization of pre-school education.

CONCLUSION

Quite a comprehensive working programme could already be drawn up on the basis of all these proposals; the colloquium may be considered to have been quite productive.

They are, undoubtedly, of a rather cautious nature and one might have hoped to see a greater display of oddness and originality; however, this would have implied greater commitment. Some groups were, in fact, dismarged by the expression 'joint action'. Despite repeated assurances there was a persistent fear of peremptory administrative decisions to standardize education policies, as a result, concern with the defense of the national cultural identity led to narrow-minded 'cultural protectionist' attitudes.

This gave rise to contradictions:

(1) There were reservations about teachers being involved in European projects, although everyone acknowledged the importance of cultural open-mindedness on the part of teachers towards the children of migrant workers and of the provision of bicultural or intercultural education. If this cultural open-mindedness is a good and necessary thing at local

level how could it be harmful in the European context? Some of the participants said that we should learn to know ourselves first, but what better way of doing it than by working together?

(2) There was a tendency to restrict the European programme to the sphere of research, or to the purely theoretical side, but this is to ignore the fact that educational research in all countries is increasingly taking the form of research/action projects: what form could such projects take at European level but programmes carried out on a cooperative basis - i.e., joint research/action?

Without this stumbling-block, other ideas for projects would certainly have been forthcoming from such creative groups.

It is also regrettable that no replies were given to some of the questions asked, perhaps due to lack of time or perhaps because participants were perplexed by the way in which they were formulated. However, this provocative formulation was intended as a stimulus. When considering some of these questions, the groups might have reflected on possible approaches to pedagogical research during the next decade. It is a great pity that the rare groups which took an interest in the question: 'What contribution do young children make to adults?' did not say much other than that in the past children provided a certain amount of security for the future, a comment which is now superfluous in view of the development of social security. What a state of affairs when specialists in the field of early childhood are unable to say what they gain from children: perhaps they really don't gain very much! It is abondantly clear that on the day when adults are able to appreciate what only children are capable of giving them, relations between adults and children will change and the education of young children will take on an aspect completely different from that it has had up to now.

The Commission should be able to meet participants' well-founded desire for information, since it is now setting up an information network with headquarters in Brussels and branches in each of the Member States. But then, more advanced and detailed comparative studies will have to be undertaken of the situations in the various countries and the projects in progress listed.

The desire to set up a data bank expressed by all participants at the Colloquium is also a matter for the Commission to deal with and seems to be a very positive suggestion. In particular, it would give access to children throughout the Community, to the entire childhood cultural heritage produced by small children or inspired by them (legends, fairy stories, songs, chanting rhymes, games, etc.). To this could be added typical creations of childhood which could not come into being until pre-school education was organized (collective stories made up and illustrated by groups of children, stories on record or tape, musical comedies, collective creations of all types). This posting of material would represent a very considerable cultural enrichment for children.

It would also be easy to organize the teacher exchanges advocated by the Colloquium in the near future.

They would represent very worthwhile experience for the teachers and lead to less ethnocentric attitudes on their pad. If it were combined with an exchange of correspondence between the children whose teachers exchange classes, the whole experiment might take on a much broader scope (with young children who cannot yet write the exchange could not take the usual scholastic form). Since nothing solid can be achieved at nursery schools unless parents are involved in the projects, teacher exchanges could give rise to small-scale 'twinning' of educational communities, which would be easier to achieve in frontier regions. If they were carried out in conjunction with an immigration country (for example, between France and Italy) and involved teaching establishments receiving the majority of their pupils from that country, it is easy to see the educational possibilities opened up by a well thought-out and implemented exchange of teachers.

The teachers who had taken part and stood out in these exchanges could, as a result of this experience, become the 'European pilot teachers' referred to by Discussion Group 3. During subsequent training periods they could exchange experiences, carry out a detailed examination of the latter together and become, for their respective countries, the architects of a broader European education with a more open outlook on the world as a whole and more effective in its means of action.

It is regrettable that few suggestions were made concerning underprivileged children (Fourth World children, the handicapped, etc.). However, it should be pointed out that all the proposals concerning the information and education of families, dietary habits, prevention and hygiene, and the links between parents and school would be particularly beneficial to these categories of children.

If the Commission considers it advisable to set up a European centre for preschool education in order to launch these studies, projects and data compilations, its structure should be extremely loose and decentralized.

In view of the short duration of the Colloquium it was not possible to present very detailed proposals, and working seminars should be organized to specify the form to be taken by joint actions found suitable for setting in motion in the near future.

Subsequently, a colloquium like the present one could reexamine the most controversial questions. In particular, a study should be made of the extent to which and the forms in which European initiatives may seem opportune or dangerous as regards the training of teachers, syllabuses and, in general, anything which has a more direct effect on the organization of pre-school education in the Member States.

Only when a start has been made on working together, even in the most modest fashion, will a gradual European consensus emerge to give clear indications of the areas in which action is highly desirable and necessary.

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The second part comprises the principal papers of a colloquium of experts organized by the Commission at the Sèvres International Centre for Educational Studies in May 1979. This selection includes, as well as the working papers and synthesis report, the full texts of the reports of the four discussion groups which carried on the colloquium's work.

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